Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party
August, 1973
20 pence

Editorial Comments

TONY CHATER

THE STRATEGY OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE TODAY

PETER WYNCOLL

THE EARLY SOCIALISTS IN NOTTINGHAM

Discussion:

MICK COSTELLO
Opportunities in the Present Situation

SYLVIA THYER
Marxism and the Family

D. D. GRANT
The Althusser Debate

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MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Volume 17, Number 8

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Orders and Subscriptions Usual agents or Central Books Ltd., 37 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS

Subscription rates £2.85 per annum

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Editorial Comments

THE Engineers', Confederation and Miners' Conferences have all rejected the Government's Phase II pay policy, put forward demands for substantial wage increases and reductions in hours, and called on the TUC to break off the talks with the Government. This mood has also been expressed in other union conferences. The Court decision on the Co-op award, while welcomed and embarrassing to the Government, does not abolish the Counter-Inflation Act which is its main weapon for keeping wages down.

Much of the emphasis is placed on getting the TUC in September to break away from its line of accommodating the Government, a line which gives credence to the argument of the Government that the main cause of inflation is the level of wage increases, and which also confuses and immobilises the movement.

Thus the TUC will be the battleground where all ideas of Incomes Policies—voluntary or statutory—can be soundly defeated. Such an outcome will be of tremendous importance for the period ahead, shifting the emphasis of struggle towards political solutions.

There are also signs of a downward trend in retail sales that arise directly from the catastrophic rise in prices while the level of wages settlements remains low.

It is significant that the militant attitude adopted on these issues is matched, as in the case of the miners, with the strengthening of the Left. The rejection of the anti-Communist resolution which would have prevented Communists from attending meetings of the Union's delegation to the Labour Party Conference, the election of Mick McGahey as Vice President, and his narrow defeat for nomination to the TUC General Council indicate the growing understanding of the need to match left and militant policies with the election of leaders who will carry them out.

INTO STRUGGLE

While the unions prepare for battle the threat of a new monetary crisis looms large with the dollar and £ falling further in value, giving rise to panic calls to patch up the inexorable inter-capitalist contradictions that lie at the root of the problem, alongside the devising of new ways to make the working class bear the burden.

All this is revealing to millions not only the "unpleasant and unacceptable face of capitalism" but equally its rotten essence, and sharpening the search for radical alternatives.

Against this background, and an integral part of the struggle and arguments now developing, is the debate on Labour's "Programme for Britain".

If the reaction of Mr. Alan Campbell McLean, Chairman of the Scottish Labour Party is an indication of the expectations of rank and file Labour Party members and trade unionists, then the right-left battle must sharpen still further. That the programme contains much that is good is the direct consequence of the influence of the mass movement and growing Left influence. That it contains much of the discredited consensus approach is a measure of what still needs to be done to break the right wing grip. Not only will the central question of extending public ownership be debated, but of equal importance is the sovereignty of the Labour Party Conference, which the right wing still seek to subvert.

Thus on all these fronts the long, hot summer may well end in a storm of struggle that can help create the conditions for forcing a General Election.

In all the activity, argument and action the need for political clarity arises more sharply, and from Jack Woddis' book *Time to Change Course* everyone so engaged will draw strength and inspiration.

SOVIET STUDY OF MARXIST PHILOSOPHY

In recent issues we have drawn attention to Soviet books now in German translation, one on Social-Democracy, the other on State-Monopoly Capitalism. To these we are now glad to add a book on Marxist Philosophy.[1]

This is a comprehensive work which,

[1] *Probleme der Philosophie und der Philosophie-Geschichte*, (Problems of Philosophy and of the Philosophy of History) by T. I. Oiserman, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, German Democratic Republic.

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beginning with a discussion of the origins of philosophy and the ideas of its earliest practitioners, carries this over to our own times with an analysis of Existentialism, Linguistic Philosophy, the ideas of Karl Popper and of other contemporary philosophical writers.

Amongst many other important problems discussed, the following take pride of place—first, the question which has baffled many philosophers in the past and which continues to baffle many contemporary ones—i.e. what is philosophy? Then the question of the relation of philosophy to science as well as the nature of *Weltanschauung* (World-View) and some features of Marxism-Leninism as a scientific world-view.

The book also deals with the negative and positive aspects of mechanical materialism, the dialectical unity of knowledge and value judgments in any world view and emphasises the anti-dogmatic character of Marxism. "Marxist philosophy which has made clear the historically relative character of knowledge and of the value judgments embodied in any world-view . . . lays claim neither to absolute knowledge nor to approach reality from absolutist positions. This is why philosophy as a world view is, from the standpoint of Marxism, the formulation above all, of theoretical positions from which the *significance* of every kind of knowledge, every experience and action, every historical event, can be evaluated."

PARTICLES AND POLITICS

The announcement by a small team of physicists at Leeds University of the detection of a new nuclear particle has both scientific and political significance. Scientifically if the Leeds team are correct, and the supporting evidence is impressive, they appear to have made at least a qualitative jump in our knowledge of nuclear matter. Politically they have descended from their ivory towers in choosing a name for the new particle.

The new particle is at least twelve times more massive than the most massive particle found previously, which hardly lives long enough to cross the nucleus at the speed of light (about 10^{-23} seconds) (i.e. one hundred-thousand-million-million-millionth part of a second). In contrast the new particle appears to be stable by nuclear standards. This mass and lifetime indicates that the slow change in the properties of particles as their mass increases, which has been examined by nuclear physicists for the last 20 years, has finally been surpassed and new properties begin to reveal themselves when the energy necessary to produce large masses becomes available.

The properties so far derived for the new particle are compatible with two particles proposed by theoretical physicists: the quark and the intermediate vector boson. The existence of a quark would enable the existence of hundreds of nuclear particles to be explained in much the same way as the discovery of the proton electron and neutron enabled the Mendeleev periodic table of elements to be explained. The quark is proposed as a fundamental building block of nuclear matter; however, in spite of a terrific scientific effort over the past ten years by many teams of scientists all over the world, no conclusive evidence for the existence of the quark has emerged. The Leeds evidence slightly favours the intermediate vector boson rather than the quark.

The intermediate vector boson, a functional name, for a particle which if it existed would indicate the relationship between at least two of the four fundamental forces known to man; the discovery of such a particle would be an event of great importance in the history of science.

The Leeds team of Dr. Walter Kellerman, Dr. Gordon Brooke and Mr. John Baruch, who is a member of the Communist Party have named their particle Mandela after Nelson and Winnie Mandela of South Africa. This name suggested by John Baruch was motivated by a number of reasons. Firstly concern that the use of science for the benefit of mankind required at least a democratic society—a society for which both Nelson and Winnie Mandela are struggling. Secondly the particle is named after both a man and a woman, and thirdly a particle which signifies a unity of fundamental forces in nature required a name to reflect the unity of peoples necessary to build a new society to fully realise the control of nature. Nowhere is this better shown than in South Africa where the African National Congress of which Nelson Mandela was president is calling for a unity of all people committed to a democratic society, in order to overthrow the present repressive and racialist regime. Finally Nelson Mandela already has ties with Leeds University having been an honourary vice-president of the Leeds University Students Union.

The Leeds team have made a number of

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predictions from their results and other teams are already preparing to check them; confirmation or otherwise of their findings should be available within a year.

MARXIST ANALYSIS OF SHELLEY

In spite of the admiration of Marx and Engels for Shelley's poetry—or perhaps partly because of it—non-Marxist literary critics have on the whole tended to give Shelley rather short shrift in the present century. In view of this a recent Marxist analysis of Shelley, *Shelley, Imagination et Revolution*, by Jean Duparc, published by the Centre D'Etudes et de Recherches Marxistes in Paris, is to be warmly welcomed.[2]

Duparc's work is valuable both as a contribution to Marxist critical theory and as a work which attempts to do justice to Shelley's achievement, particularly in "Prometheus Unbound". He argues that the only scientific starting-point for the critic is to ask why and how a particular complex of meanings should appear in the form of "Prometheus Unbound" in 1819, and why this same poetic ensemble should retain a certain interest for us in the present day. Rejecting oversimplification and mechanical "explanations" of the poem he argues that a satisfactory analysis must go beyond the tracing of "influences" to an understanding of the richness and significance of the poetic complexity.

Such an approach reveals the "overdeterminations" in Shelley's work, seeing, for example, a revealing co-existence of revolutionary intentions and mystical aspirations which are representative of the contradictory tensions and movements in the poetry, and in the life with which Shelley was trying to come to terms. Whilst defending Shelley against his detractors Duparc also points to some of his weaknesses; the lack of concern with the process of production for example, and the greater interest in revolutionary goals than in revolutionary organisation. Let us hope that this work stimulates Marxists in this country to contribute more to a fuller understanding of Shelley's poetry.

"OUR HISTORY"

What were the main features of the General Crisis of the Seventeenth century? Why were Britain and the Dutch United Provinces able to cope with this crisis more easily than other European countries?

The latest pamphlet issued by the History Group of the Communist Party[3] is devoted to a discussion of these questions on the background of the general problem of the transition from Feudalism to Capitalism in Britain and the rest of Europe. It takes the form of a critique of views on these questions advanced by Eric Hobsbawm, by David Parker, a young History Lecturer from Leeds University, in a paper given to the History Seminar of the Communist University '72.

In it Parker, while paying great tribute to many of Hobsbawm's ideas and formulations, nevertheless argues that Hobsbawm has greatly under-rated or even ignored the impact on this period of the "interminable warfare conducted on a larger and more terrifying scale than ever before . . . there were only six years of complete peace in the entire century".

Parker gives us a broad survey of the economic, political and social developments in most of the European countries especially France, and contrasts this with the agricultural, industrial and political development in England showing their impact on the different speeds of advance from Feudalism to Capitalism in both cases.

A most interesting, useful and lucidly presented case.

SOVIET STUDIES OF BRITISH HISTORY

Soviet studies in the history of this country are carried forward by a new collection of essays, *Studies in British History*, brought out last spring in Russian by the Institute of General History of The Academy of Sciences, Moscow (Nauka Publishers).

For those concerned with British working class history, there is a remarkable study of little-used documents in the City of London and other records by N. M. Meshcheryakova, *Workhouses in England in the First Half of the 18th Century*, in which she shows the economic significance of these establishments, as distinct from their role in controlling pauperism. P. V. Gurevich writes on *V. I. Lenin and the British Labour Movement at the*

[2] The address of the publishers is as follows:—Centre D'Etudes et de Recherches Marxistes, 64 Boulevard Auguste Blanqui, Paris 13e, France.

[3] "Our History" Pamphlet 56. Winter '73. "Europe's Seventeenth-Century Crisis—A Marxist Re-appraisal." David Parker. Obtainable from the History Group of the Communist Party, 16 King Street, London, WC2E 8HY.

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beginning of the 20th Century. A. G. Sudeikin studies *The Colonial Policy of the first Labour Government (1924)*, L. I. Golman, one of the senior scholars at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, writes a very timely article on *F. Engels on the most important Problems of Irish History in the 19th Century*. Another, appropriately topical essay is *The Political Struggle in Great Britain in Connection with the Integration Plans of the Monopolies* by I. I. Zhigalov: it deals with the discussions on entry into the Common Market since 1956, starting with Harold Macmillan's condemnation of the idea in November of that year.

On more general historical subjects, there is *Anglo-Dutch Relations in 1642-1648 and the Peace of Muenster:* in this essay, by N. B. Ter-Akopyan, there is a penetrating analysis of class relations in Holland at the time, showing the sympathies of the bourgeoisie with the English Parliament and the pro-Royalist activities of Dutch aristocracy who still held important positions in the Dutch Republic. I. Y. Rodzinskaya writes on Russo-British relations in the 1760's and 1770's, in her essay—*The "Natural" Allies* (a phrase taken from contemporary papers)—tracing the common military diplomatic and economic interests of the two countries. N. A. Yerofeyev, who is the general editor of the volume and has written much on British 19th century history, contributes a paper on *British Colonial Policy and the Navy Law of 1889* (in which the "Two-Power Standard"—then directed against France and Russia, in a period of sharpening international rivalries) was formally proclaimed.

A. M. Nekrich writes on *British Policy in Greek Affairs, 1941-1945*, quoting chapter and verse from the evidence of reactionary British politicians and military men to outline the whole ugly story of intervention to "prevent the bloodless passing of power into the hands of the Communists" (in the words of one British agent). There are also two letters, in English, from Sir John Simon (January 30, 1935 and May 11, 1937), their texts, in the Scottish Record Office, have never appeared in English before, and they are revealing for the light they throw on pre-Munich "appeasement".

HONOR ARUNDEL

We would like to add our tributes to the many which have already been paid to Honor Arundel, whose death occurred in June.

Details of her life and work as a communist of many years standing, journalist, writer of splendid and popular books for children, have already been given elsewhere.

Here we would like to mention her activities on the cultural front, especially in Scotland, where she made her home after her marriage to the actor, Alex McCrindle. She was for many years a leading figure in the cultural work of the Communist Party and other progressive bodies in Scotland. She helped to organise a number of Marxist-Christian dialogues and, while her health lasted, many other cultural activities.

Her small book *The Freedom of Art* was amongst the first to discuss such questions as the meaning of freedom in art, its forms under socialism and questions of censorship.

We were glad to publish her interesting article on "Parents and Children" in our May issue.

She lived a full and active life and her death is a great loss to all who work for a socialist Britain.

We send our condolences to her family.

Erratum

In our July "Editorial Comments", at the bottom of page 197 under the heading "Alienation", it states "The Marx of the 'Communist Manifesto' is said to be 'impoverished' by the Marx of 'Capital'." This should read—"The Marx of the 'Communist Manifesto' and of 'Capital' are said to be 'impoverished'...".

Discussion - please note!

We intend to close the discussion on "Marxism and the Family" with a reply by Rosemary Small to be published in the December issue of *Marxism Today*. We have several contributions in hand which we intend to print, and we will accept further contributions up to September 15. After that date new contributions on this subject will *not* be accepted.

As we announced in our July issue, no further contributions on the Lewis-Althusser debate will be accepted except any concluding remarks that John Lewis or Louis Althusser may wish to make. It is hoped to publish contributions on this subject now in hand over the next few issues.

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The Strategy of Peaceful Coexistence Today

Tony Chater

Ours is the epoch of socialist revolutions and the struggle for national liberation. It is an epoch in which the imperialists are no longer able to dictate the course of events as in the past. The very success of the revolutionary struggle has created powerful forces which if sufficiently mobilised and united are capable of imposing the people's will for peace and social progress, and in so doing, advancing still further the struggle for revolutionary change.

This is the essence of the concept of peaceful co-existence. For Marxists, the struggle for peaceful co-existence is a central part of the strategy for socialist revolution throughout the world today.

At first sight this may seem a contradiction in terms. How is it possible at one and the same time to be for world revolution and peaceful co-existence?

War and Revolution

There is implied in such a question an incorrect equation of war and revolution. It is, of course, true that the two world wars, which were both started by the imperialists, ended in socialist revolutions. But this by no means implies that the way to socialist revolution is necessarily through war.

Had the forces for peace in the thirties been strong enough to impose their will on the imperialists, then the course of the struggle, its form, would have been different. But this would not have altered its revolutionary content, namely, the shifting of the balance of forces against imperialism, which is the real basis for creating the conditions for the transfer of power to the working class and its allies.

Many of the doubts and questions raised about peaceful co-existence seem to hinge on the failure to grasp that this is a field of struggle in which the aim is to undermine imperialist power through mass confrontation. It is not a question of ending the class struggle but of intensifying it, raising it to an entirely new level. It means winning workers to understand the need for a class position in foreign affairs as much as home affairs.

Peaceful co-existence is not a question of maintaining the status quo as some assert, but of changing it through mass struggle. Neither is it a question of establishing a state of ideological peace between socialism and capitalism. It requires an even bigger ideological offensive against imperialism so that the people can see more clearly the causes of war, poverty and hunger, and act accordingly.

Peaceful co-existence does not mean abandoning the national liberation movement or denying it the right to take armed action to secure its just demands. On the contrary, to the extent that the struggle for peaceful co-existence mobilises the masses of the people against imperialism, to that extent does it weaken imperialism and win allies for the national liberation movement. And to the extent that the national liberation movement scores successes, to that extent is imperialism weakened and the fight for peaceful co-existence advanced. The two are intertwined because each in its own way is objectively anti-imperialist in its content.

How much of all this is pie-in-the-sky theory? How far has it really been tested in the hard school of experience? Certainly there has been no third world war. Peaceful co-existence in that sense has therefore been a fact during the last 28 years. But it has been no less of a fact that in that time there have been many terrible wars, Vietnam being the most outstanding example. In all of these the peace movement intervened actively and thereby, through its experiences, grew in strength.

The War in Vietnam

The fight to end the US war in Vietnam was crucial in this respect because it became a test of strength between the world's most powerful imperialist power and the entire world movement for peace, national liberation and social progress. The signing of the Peace Treaty ending the US war in Vietnam was therefore an event of world historic importance.

It showed that overwhelming technical superiority is no match for a people resolutely determined to resist aggression, when they are backed by a massive movement of international solidarity and assistance.

The depth and clarity of the Vietnamese people's commitment to the fight for national salvation was neither accidental nor inevitable. Doubtless it reflected in part the historical experience of the Vietnamese nation. But of prime importance was the leadership given by the Vietnamese Communists based on a political strategy and tactics conforming to the scientific concepts of Marxism. As a result the anti-imperialist struggle was linked with a

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realistic perspective for revolutionary social advance and became the rallying ground for mobilising the entire Vietnamese nation. All that is best in patriotism, love for one's country, for its people, was combined and strengthened with internationalism and class understanding, and consequently, great importance was attached to mobilising support behind the Vietnamese struggle from the three great forces capable of tipping the balance against imperialism, the socialist countries, the national liberation movement, and the working-class in the capitalist countries. The ultimate outcome was the isolation of the US aggressor within the world community of nations, and the isolation of the most reactionary supporters of the war within the United States itself.

This, then is the lesson of Vietnam. The masses of the people, mobilised and united on a world scale, showed that they really do have the power to impose their will for peace and justice on the imperialists, not just on small relatively unimportant matters, but on major questions of fundamental policy. People can now be assured of their own ability to shape events. To the extent that they were involved in the struggle, this realisation is now part of their consciousness. It will therefore give added impetus to every struggle, large and small, wherever ordinary men and women are fighting for their just rights and demands, and that includes the sharp class battles being waged today here in Britain.

A Process of Struggle

Because the signing of the Peace Treaty on Vietnam was a function of the extent to which the balance of forces is shifting against imperialism, it underlines in a dramatic way the new stage reached in the fight for peace.

Already there have been a number of important events which point in the same direction. The Chinese Peoples' Republic has been admitted to the United Nations. There has been the SALT Agreement. In Europe, there has been the Soviet-West German Treaty, the Polish-West German Treaty, the West Berlin Agreement, the Agreement between the GDR and GFR, the recognition of the GDR by an increasing number of states including Britain, the Soviet-West German agreements on economic, scientific and cultural co-operation, the Brezhnev-Nixon talks, and now the convening of the Conference of States on European Security and Co-operation.

These developments reflect the extent to which the Cold War has failed to achieve the objectives imperialism sought to gain through it. In substance, we are arriving now at what can become the beginning of the end for the Cold War, or to put it positively, the beginning of a process through which a firmer basis can be established for peaceful coexistence and co-operation.

Its realisation, however, depends on the mobilisation of wider and wider sections of public opinion, through the trade unions and political parties, cultural groups and scientific bodies, the Co-operatives, the churches of every religion, sporting associations, indeed every single democratic popular organisation in all walks of life. We are dealing with a process which is neither spontaneous nor smooth. *It is a process of struggle.* It will therefore not be without difficulties, and doubtless, in its unfolding, not without setbacks. That having been said, however, it is important to grasp the historical significance of the stage reached in the breakdown of the Cold War barriers and to take full advantage of the big possibilities for further advance which this foreshadows.

Lenin and Peaceful Co-existence

Peaceful co-existence of states with differing social systems has been the general concept on which socialist foreign policy has been based ever since the October Revolution. It was Lenin's view that the most desirable and advisable form of the new Socialist Republic's existence in a predominantly capitalist world was a situation where nations lived side by side in peace. This, he considered, accorded best with the development of the socialist revolution and social progress throughout the world.

Lenin had no illusions on the subject. Peaceful co-existence of states with mutually opposed systems was a form of class struggle carried into the domain of international contacts. It called for the mobilisation of the broadest sections of the world's population to prevent the imperialists crushing the new Socialist Republic, and beyond that, to impose lasting relations of co-existence and co-operation on them.

In his report on Home and Foreign Policy to the Ninth All-Russian Congress of Soviets on December 23, 1921, Lenin stressed the importance of this world-wide development of the struggle when he posed the question of how it had been possible for the lone Socialist Republic to survive the intervention of a whole array of "frenziedly hostile imperialist powers" in the absence of successful socialist revolution elsewhere.

> "It turned out that although the support of the working people of the world was not the swift and direct support (i.e. revolution—TC) that we had counted on, and which we had regarded as the basis of the whole of our policy, we did receive considerable support of another kind, not a direct support, not a swift support. It was precisely this support, precisely this sympathy of the workers and peasants throughout the world, even in countries

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most hostile to us, that was the final and most decisive source, the decisive reason for the complete failure of all the attacks directed against us. The alliance of the working people throughout the world which we had proclaimed and which had been realised within the borders of our republic made itself felt in all countries. No matter how precarious this support may be as long as capitalism exists in other countries, we may say that this support can already be relied on. Because of this sympathy and support that we now command, the intervention, which we endured during the past three years, which caused us so much incredible destruction and suffering, is, I will not say impossible—one has to be very cautious and circumspect here—but, at any rate, it has to a great extent been made far more difficult for our enemies to carry out."

A Consistent Strategy

Peaceful co-existence with capitalist states was not considered as something possible only for a short time, although Lenin, as a realist, understood the aggressive character of imperialism and warned that the possibility could not be excluded of a future imperialist attack on the USSR if the imperialists considered the conditions were propitious. Neither was it a tactic of the moment, dictated by the need to adapt to an unfavourable international situation on the understanding that it could be replaced at any time by military confrontation to extend the revolution. Naturally, the economic and military assistance which the socialist countries can give to revolutionary Governments, as well as their political, diplomatic and moral support, can be crucial in preventing them from being crushed by the outside military intervention of foreign imperialists. This was seen in Vietnam. And it can also help to prevent such intervention from even taking place —as in the Cuba crisis. *But the export of revolution is not a Marxist concept.* On the contrary, Marxism holds that the socialist revolution requires the maturing of the class conflict *within* a given capitalist country. This is not to say that the existing socialist societies exert no influence on the aspirations of the people in other countries, but they do so by example, and this is the more effective under conditions of peaceful co-existence. Peaceful co-existence provides the best basis for the building of socialism, for the ever fuller satisfaction of the growing material and spiritual requirements of the people, and hence for demonstrating the superiority of the socialist system over capitalism.

The Principles of Peaceful Co-existence

Peaceful co-existence means more than the absence of war. It sums up a whole new system of international relations. It means repudiating war as a means of solving disputed questions, opting instead for their settlement by negotiation. It means respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, respect for the right of all peoples freely to choose their social and political system in their own way, and the expansion of trade and other forms of economic, scientific and cultural co-operation between countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.

These principles of peaceful co-existence have only to be spelled out and it becomes clear that every victory achieved in implementing them is objectively a defeat for imperialism and its drive to war, and that, in this way, peaceful co-existence makes its own contribution to the longer term revolutionary process. The issue is nothing less than the mobilisation of millions and millions of people throughout the world to impose their will for peace, national independence and social progress on imperialist governments and the big international firms who back them. It is mass struggle on a world scale, making its contribution to exposing the nature of imperialism, developing political maturity and self-confidence in the popular power to decide the course of events—all of which are essential elements for the growth of revolutionary consciousness.

Imperialism and War

There is no question of imperialism ever changing its spots—such ideas have nothing to do with the concept of peaceful co-existence. Imperialism is a system based on armed robbery, and it will not hesitate to use armed force, *if it can.* The ferocious slaughters in Vietnam showed that. But the key words are "if it can".

Even within the context of peaceful co-existence, imperialist governments will not stop trying to manoeuvre themselves into a position of advantage relative to the socialist world, the national liberation movement, and the working class of the capitalist countries, and to use whatever economic benefits they each may obtain from better relations with the socialist world to strengthen their hand in the competition with their imperialist rivals. But to see *only* the aims and intentions of the imperialists, to see *only* the imperialist drive to war, is to see only one side of the question. Imperialism will go all out for its own ends, it drives to war—that is the nature of the beast. But whether it gets what it wants, whether a war is actually launched, and if launched, whether it is successful, depends basically upon the strength of the forces ranged against the imperialists. That is the basic principle constantly raised by the concept of peaceful co-existence.

Fifty or sixty years ago there was no question about which side had the power. Now there is. Today the socialist countries, the national liberation movement, and the working class in the capitalist countries are strong enough, if mobilised and united,

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to impose peace on the imperialists. They are the forces which increasingly dictate the course of world events.

They may not always succeed. Vietnam was the bitter proof of that. But this does not alter the point at issue. As we have said, the fight for peace is a struggle, and as with all struggles, it has its setbacks and it chalks up its victories. But looking at the period since the end of the Second World War the trend is unmistakeable. Imperialism is sinking into deeper and deeper crisis. In such a situation, unity of the anti-imperialist forces can deal it decisive blows.

The Trend of the Struggle

This is in fact what happened with the signing of the Peace Treaty in Vietnam. It happened also with the liberation of Bangladesh, where the rout of Yahya Khan was a major defeat for US imperialist policy in S.E. Asia and a setback for the US-dominated SEATO and CENTO alliances.

The developments in Europe already mentioned also indicate this trend. The all-inclusive Conference of States on European Security and Co-operation now in progress, together with the Vienna talks on arms reductions, can lead to further measures of *détente* and disarmament, including the eventual elimination of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. All of this adds up to an important victory over imperialism and heralds a more stable basis for peaceful co-existence.

The same goes for the admission of China to the United Nations which was the recognition of the bankruptcy of the cold-war policy of isolating the Chinese Revolution.

Whatever the difficulties, this does not alter the fact that taken together, the new situation in Europe, S.E. Asia, and with regard to China, the growth of struggle in Southern Africa and Guinea-Bissau, the important developments in Chile and other Latin American countries, and the move to the left in Western Europe, highlighted by the Common Programme of Government between the French Communists, Socialists and Left Radicals, all add up to a powerful testimony to the strength of the forces capable of sustaining the new stage reached in the process of establishing a system of international relations more firmly based on peaceful co-existence and co-operation.

All this points to the onset of a new stage in the general crisis of capitalism, one in which all the main contradictions which characterise this historical period of transition to socialism reach a point of development where imperialism finds it increasingly difficult to repair its fences and achieve any really lasting measure of stability for its system of exploitation. More and more the initiative passes to the forces for peace, national liberation, and socialism. That is the underlying trend.

It is the contradiction between capitalism and socialism, two world systems, which determines the main direction of change in international affairs today, and in the development of this contradiction, the socialist countries have gained in strength, building up their economies despite problems of management and planning which in the present stage of their growth they are having to overcome, whilst capitalism has sunk deeper into a crisis from which there is no escape and which prevents it from utilising to the full its industrial and technological capabilities.

Then there is the contradiction between the working class and the capitalist class which has become increasingly sharp within the developed capitalist countries as the crisis of the system becomes both more acute and more obviously a chronic condition.

To this is added the contradiction between imperialism and the national liberation movement, which never ceases to grow in its intensity, and despite the setbacks which have occured, this shifts increasingly in the direction of complete political and economic independence as the struggle proceeds.

Last, but by no means least, are the inter-imperialist rivalries and the conflicts of interest within the capitalist classes of the separate countries themselves. This latter is seen not only between the monopoly groups and the small or medium businesses. As the balance tips against imperialism, it also becomes apparent within the monopoly groups themselves, between those who are deeply entrenched within the military-industrial complex and with most to gain from the cold-war, and others whose interests make it easier for them to adopt a more realistic position and adapt to the new relations of forces in the world.

This new stage in the general crisis of capitalism therefore reflects on the one hand the strengthening of the socialist world, the working class movement in the developed capitalist countries, and the national liberation movement in the Third World, and on the other hand the divisions and conflicts between the capitalists themselves within and between different capitalist states. But it is important to understand that it is the former which sets the pace, which creates the conditions for the peculiar sharpness of the latter as we see it today.

The particular form taken by this inter-imperialist conflict is the move towards the division of the developed capitalist world into three great economic and trading units; the USA, Japan, and the enlarged EEC (still rent moreover by the conflicts between its members). The inability to establish a firm basis for the international monetary system illustrates the depth and intensity of the rivalries

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between them. The Nixon-Kissinger Plan for a super-NATO including them all is nothing more than an attempt by the US imperialists to stem the erosion of their formerly unchallenged domination over the capitalist world; and its fate only shows that the post-war days of US hegemony have gone for good.

National Liberation and Peaceful Co-existence

As already indicated, peaceful co-existence and the struggle for national liberation have a common denominator in their anti-imperialist content. Furthermore, there can be no lasting and secure peace whilst imperialist oppression remains.

It is a fact that most major crises since 1945 which have threatened world peace have arisen from the colonial wars of imperialism; Korea, Suez, Vietnam, Cuba are examples. In the Middle East, a state of war and tension constantly threatens world peace, and follows directly from the intrigues particularly of the US imperialists acting in support of Israeli aggression. Then there are the Portuguese wars, supported by NATO, in Guinea-Bissau and Southern Africa. In Southern Africa, faced with the racist régimes and the denial of all democratic and human rights, the African people have turned to armed struggle to win their demands. The unholy alliance of Portuguese colonialism, South African apartheid, and Rhodesian racist rule, backed by Western imperialism, particularly Britain and the USA, has created a base for neo-colonialist intrigue and intervention further to the north on the African continent. This is a constant source of tension which in time could develop into a real threat to world peace.

The struggle for peaceful co-existence is therefore intimately connected with the fight against imperialist wars and intrigue. Objectively, it cannot be separated from support for the national liberation movement.

In this connection, the most important immediate task is to ensure that the Peace Treaty on Vietnam is fully and speedily implemented and the US ceases its intervention in Cambodia and Laos. And the victory in Vietnam already achieved emphasises in another sphere the necessity for an upsurge in the movement of solidarity with the peoples of Southern Africa struggling for their national independence and for elementary human rights.

As for the Middle East, the UN Security Council Resolution 242 and the UN Assembly resolutions dealing with the just national rights of the Palestinian people provide the basis for mobilising broad support for ending the conflict. This would produce a political solution in the interests of Israel herself. It is the only way in which she can secure recognition of her own legitimate rights to exist as a state living with secure frontiers in co-operation, trade and friendship with her Arab neighbours. But a peaceful solution along these lines requires the Israeli Government to change its position with regard to the UN resolutions, and in particular to agree to withdraw from the Arab lands occupied in June, 1967. In essence this means building up public pressure on the US and British Governments in order that they cease supporting the present Israel rulers, and instead, use their influence to compel them to abandon their aggressive policy.

Peaceful Co-existence and Socialist Advance

The strategy of peaceful co-existence has an impact in a number of ways on the balance of class forces within each country. The Cold-War feeds every right-wing authoritarian tendency. *Détente* and peaceful co-existence create more favourable conditions for democratic advance.

The fight for peaceful co-existence brings out into the open the differences of interest which exist within the capitalist camp and helps to overcome some of the causes of disunity within the working class.

It weakens the support which the more aggressive military-industrial complex receives from other groups within the capitalist class, groups which do not reap so much benefit from military contracts but stand to gain more from increased trade and co-operation with the socialist countries.

Internationally, by offering trade and economic co-operation with the socialist countries on terms of equality, mutual interest and respect for national rights, it weakens the hold of the big capitalist states over the smaller ones. Even amongst the bigger capitalist states it helps to generate a serious challenge to US hegemony and to loosen their commitment to the sort of rigid Cold-War alliance which the US managed to impose on them in the period following the Second World War. In this connection it is worth recalling the way the myth of Soviet aggression was used to whip up an atmosphere of hysteria, which, combined with the strings attached to Marshall Aid, made it possible to establish the NATO bloc and start the re-arming of Western Germany.

Within the labour movement the cold war spreads disunity and obscures the real issues facing the working class by the crudest forms of anti-Communist and anti-Soviet propaganda. Increasing commitment to peaceful co-existence therefore cannot help but remove some of the justification for all this and hence be to the advantage of the working class, both as concerns immediate issues and long term socialist aims.

The struggle for peaceful co-existence has an even more direct bearing on the strategy for socialist advance, especially in countries like Chile and the developed capitalist countries of Western Europe.

In the past a peaceful development of the revolu-

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tion, that is, without civil war, was not a realisable possibility. Not that the revolutionary leadership did not desire it and seek to bring it about.

As long ago as September 1871, Marx declared to the London Conference of the International Working Men's Association:

> "We must declare to the governments: we know that you are the armed power which is directed against the proletarians: we will go forward against you in a peaceful way so long as that is possible to us, and with arms, if it should be necessary."

For a period in 1917, Lenin sought to secure the transfer of state power to the working class by peaceful means through winning the majority in the Soviets. As late as September, he was suggesting a compromise with the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in an effort to secure a peaceful forward movement of the revolution.

But under the conditions existing then, armed insurrection became inevitable and subsequently it was not possible to prevent the launching of the far bloodier armed intervention of the foreign imperialists.

New opportunities

Today both external and internal factors, particularly in Western Europe, offer new opportunities for a peaceful transition to socialism.

Internally, the concentration of economic and political power more and more in the hands of the monopolists, the squeezing out of the small people, the fact that imperialism and monopoly attack not only the working class but the different sections of the middle class, including small shopkeepers, farmers and businessmen, opens up the possibility and the need to unite all sections of the people—the vast majority in fact—around the working class and against the monopolists. It is therefore possible to envisage the development of such a movement, expressing itself in both Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary activity, that the monopoly capitalist class is eventually confronted with such overwhelming strength that they are compelled to submit to the democratic verdict of the people.

There remains, however, the possibility that they would try to evade this by seeking armed support from outside. But the more the principles of peaceful co-existence are forced on the imperialists as the norm of international life, reflecting thereby the combined strength of the socialist countries, the national liberation movement and the working class in the capitalist world, then the more difficult will external intervention in support of counter-revolution become.

Disarmament and European Security

The struggle for disarmament is central to the struggle for a more stable system of peaceful co-existence.

The advent of nuclear weapons, brought about a qualitative leap in the destructive power of armaments, and also a rapid escalation in the rate and cost of the arms race. It would be quite wrong to assume that the cataclysmic nature of nuclear war has, *of itself*, ruled the use of nuclear weapons out of court. War is the pursuit of politics by other means. Technology alone cannot alter the fundamental essence of that famous dictum of Clausewitz, though it can make the choice of war far less attractive to the imperialists and therefore far less likely.

In the last analysis, whether the imperialists decided on the use of nuclear weapons or not would be determined by their estimate of whether this would facilitate or hamper the achievement of their political objective. Certainly the massive damage and casualties likely to be suffered by way of retaliation would be a powerful inhibiting factor on a qualitatively new scale to that encountered with conventional weapons. The same would apply to the reaction of world public opinion which is an inhibiting factor of the highest and in the end decisive importance. Even Henry Kissinger in his

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book *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, before he rose to his present elevated position, had to recognise, however grudgingly, the impact of the Stockholm Appeal against the Bomb and the activities of the World Peace Council.

Macabre Calculations

Undoubtedly it is hard for any ordinary decent human being to contemplate macabre calculations which weigh megadeaths and world public opinion against political advantage. But this should not lead anyone to imagine that the dessicated computerised minds of the Pentagon find them as appalling. . . . It would be false and complacent to encourage the view that nuclear war is *a priori* out of the question. There is only one sure way to make it so as long as imperialism exists, and that is to arouse world public opinion to such a point that it is not only the decisive factor in preventing nuclear war, but beyond that is able to impose general and complete disarmament on the imperialists.

In 1970, the amount spent on armaments in the world reached 200,000,000,000 dollars, an increase of 30 per cent in real terms over the decade. NATO accounted for 58 per cent of this expenditure. Armaments spending places an increasing burden on the peoples of the world, affecting every aspect of economic and social life. It comes to 40 per cent more than the world's expenditure on education and it is 2½ times the spending on health. In 1968, arms expenditure was equivalent in value to total world production in 1900. If it continues to increase at the present rate, then by the year 2000 it will amount to an annual outlay of labour and material wealth equivalent in value to total consumption of resources in the world today. The threat to peace apart, such a colossal waste cannot be allowed to continue. We are constantly told, after all, that civilisation faces a crisis of resource depletion. Here at least is part of the answer.

Partial Agreements

Up to the moment, in the negotiations on disarmament, only partial agreements have been reached, and, apart from the agreement on bacteriological weapons, none of these involved any *actual* disarmament.

There has been the Partial Test Ban Treaty signed in 1963, prohibiting tests in the atmosphere, outer space and under the sea. Then there was the Non-Proliferation Treaty signed in 1968.

In 1970, the Treaty on extra-atmospheric space was signed. This prohibits the putting into orbit of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In 1971, the Treaty prohibiting the deployment of nuclear weapons on the *ocean bed* was signed.

In 1959, there was the Treaty on the Antarctic prohibiting military installations and tests in the Antarctic and stipulating that it should be used only for peaceful activities. And in 1967, the Treaty of Tlatelolco was signed prohibiting the installation and testing of nuclear weapons in Latin America.

The Treaty banning bacteriological weapons and making provisions for the destruction of existing stocks has already been mentioned. There was here a measure of disarmament, though it must be said that the military experts were already convinced that bacteriological weapons were virtually useless.

The SALT Agreement is also an important partial agreement, but it must be stressed that it does not provide for any actual nuclear disarmament, or for any cut-back in existing weapons. In fact, it does not prohibit an increase in nuclear weaponry. What it does do is to place certain limitations on the future escalation of the arms race. This must not be misinterpreted as meaning that the escalation will necessarily be stopped altogether, but it will face restrictions.

The anti-ballistic missile, or ABM, Treaty limits the extent of the introduction of anti-ballistic missile systems to two each—one around Washington or Moscow, and the other around an assemblage of land-based launchers for inter-continental ballistic missiles. It is true that a zero ABM Treaty, with no anti-ballistic missiles at all, would have been better but this was the best that could be negotiated. Introduction of ABM's on any bigger scale carried with it the threat of a very rapid escalation of the nuclear arms race. This threat will have been radically toned down by the ABM Treaty.

The Interim Agreement on offensive weapons is far less satisfactory and leaves plenty of scope for an increase in the quantity of these weapons and their modernisation, which the US Pentagon has made clear it intends to pursue. But negotiations are to continue. Failure to reach a more satisfactory agreement by 1975 could place the ABM Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty in jeopardy. The campaign for a comprehensive test ban treaty, including underground tests, all of which can now be detected by seismic methods without inspection, is therefore increasingly important, as such a Treaty would impose restrictions on the development of new weapons systems.

The campaign developing once again around the issue of the Holy Loch missile complex is also important. Glasgow Corporation, Clydebank Council and Edinburgh City Council have voted for it to be closed down. This is a demand which needs to be taken up by other local authorities and find backing in the labour and trade union movement. The Polaris submarines should be scrapped and the intention of the government to negotiate the purchase of Poseidon missiles to replace Polaris should be

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resisted. This is the sort of contribution the British people can make to the success of the second round of SALT talks on offensive weapons.

Conference on European Security

Connected with the whole issue of disarmament and dealing with problems in Europe which are at the very heart of the cold-war is the Conference of States on European Security and Co-operation which is being held in Helsinki. This ought to lead to agreements generalising the principle of the renunciation of force contained in the Treaties between the Soviet Union, Poland and West Germany to the whole of Europe. It ought to endorse the recognition of the post-war frontiers of Europe, and lead to the establishment of a continuing body which can facilitate progressive steps towards disarmament. It should also encourage all-European trade and co-operation, and lead ultimately to the dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. There is an important link here with the fight against the Common Market, for surely all-European co-operation as opposed to closed economic blocs is genuine international co-operation. And by the jobs which such co-operation would create unemployment could be drastically cut and many economic problems alleviated.

But favourable as the climate for this Conference may be, mass pressure will be needed to ensure that the Conference is successful. Powerful reactionary forces in Western Europe, outstanding being the British Tory Government, are intent on holding it up and sabotaging it. All along, the Tory line has been to try to hold up the convening of the Conference until British imperialism is firmly established within the Common Market. Theirs is the approach of "negotiation from positions of strength", the stock-in-trade of the cold war. They see the Common Market as a means of consolidating European big business into a firm bloc which can better pursue the exploitation of the West European working class and the people of the third world, the antagonism of the capitalists towards the socialist world, and the competition with the rivals of European big business in the USA and Japan. This emphasises the importance of the campaign against the Common Market. The Common Market is a divisive factor in the world as a whole. It is anti-working class, anti-socialist and anti-the national liberation movement. The big capitalist monopolies it aims to strengthen have formed the backbone of the cold war. The danger it involves is emphasised by Heath's support, apparently with Nixon's backing, for an Anglo-French nuclear force, which would be the basis of a West European nuclear force which would clearly strengthen the hands of the most reactionary forces in West European politics, including the West German General Staff.

There are those who assert that this type of analysis of the EEC contradicts the fact of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*—that in reality, Brandt is able to pursue a policy of *détente* because he starts from a position of strength ensuing from West Germany's membership of the EEC. This is the Tory "negotiation from strength" once again.

The Position of Brandt

Nothing could be further from the truth. Brandt's more realistic approach is welcome. But he remains committed to the cold war NATO alliance. Brandt has been faced with the collapse of the key element in the cold-war policy of the West German ruling class—the Hallstein doctrine. This, supported in the past by Brandt himself, set out to prevent the recognition of the GDR and the existing frontiers of Europe. But the Hallstein doctrine has become increasingly untenable thanks to the new balance of forces in the world. Brandt has had to face up to the economic successes and growing political standing of the GDR, and the diplomatic initiatives for peace of the Soviet Union have given him the opportunity to opt for an approach more in keeping with European reality, in the process isolating the more right wing CDU/CSU elements.

Brandt's policies reflect therefore, at one and the same time, the popular pressure for change within the Federal Republic and a more realistic understanding of the world situation by certain sections of the West German ruling class, who are now prepared to accept limited measures of *détente* and take advantage of the opportunities for trade with the socialist countries which this affords. No doubt, being opportunists like all capitalists they are also influenced by the added strength politically and economically, which this could give them in their competition with their capitalist rivals in Europe, the USA and Japan—a competition which becomes fiercer as the crisis within the world capitalist system deepens. Whatever their calculations, however, the important point is that the facts of life have forced them to adopt a more realistic position, which objectively tends to loosen the fortress-like cohesion of the cold-war alliance, and open the way for further shifts in the balance of forces favouring peaceful co-existence.

Far from encouraging the movement of *détente*, the consolidation of Britain's entry into the EEC would reinforce the opposition to Brandt's policies from the most reactionary elements within the West German military-industrial complex, who, like the Tories are loth to face realities, and see in Britain's entry the promise of acquiring nuclear status.

This is one powerful reason at least why no terms of entry for Britain can ever be acceptable, and why Wilson's ideas about re-negotiating terms should be rejected. The issue is not re-

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negotiation, but winning the TUC and the Labour Party Conference to demand a pledge that the next Labour Government will withdraw Britain unconditionally from the EEC.

Partial Agreements and General Disarmament

How should the value of the partial agreements to which reference has already been made and their influence on the process of achieving general and complete disarmament be estimated?

It would certainly be wrong to regard them as absolutely good or absolutely bad. Their principal defect is that they have not led to the destruction of any of the armaments considered useful by the military chiefs. Further the fact that certain armaments or tests (e.g. underground nuclear tests) are not included in one or other of the agreements carries the risk that they may appear thereby to have been legitimised.

Moreover, the arms race has not been stopped by these agreements. Whether it would have been worse without them is arguable, though if we consider the SALT Agreement this would certainly appear to be the case. But the fact remains that the figures for arms spending show the arms race to have escalated, notwithstanding any restrictive effect which these agreements may or may not have had, and if we consider the Partial Test Ban Treaty for example, the number of tests in the years following its signature has exceeded the number in the same period before.

Perhaps the most serious defect of such agreements is that they can encourage either complacency on the part of those who consider that they indicate that things are going well and so all should be left to the negotiators—or else cynicism on the part of those who contrast the agreements reached with the actual level of disarmament achieved.

However, despite the problems, these partial agreements have many positive features. They do after all, represent concrete acts, however limited. The Partial Test Ban Treaty at least stopped the pollution of the atmosphere by US, British and Soviet Tests. The Non-Proliferation Treaty does impose limitations on the number of nuclear powers, and so it can help to prevent the situation from becoming more dangerous and more difficult to handle as far as any future nuclear disarmament agreement is concerned. Some of the agreements also provide an opportunity for testing out limited inspection and control systems.

Another advantage is that the search for such agreements helps to maintain contacts and a climate of negotiation, even at the height of cold war tensions. This cannot be lightly dismissed. Negotiation must become the normal method of regulating international conflicts and differences. Furthermore, in the course of these negotiations, the technical problems associated with disarmament get fully explored and the political problems identified.

The Struggle for Peace

The cold war warriors may regard these partial agreements as measures of "arms control", part of the technique for maintaining the "balance" of terror in the face of rapid technological advance and the costs involved. But such agreements can in fact become steps towards disarmament on condition that the pressure is maintained to ensure that each one is followed with the minimum of delay by further agreements. As always, massive mobilisation of world opinion is the key.

Communists have always said that for them peace is a central issue. To deprive the imperialists of their ability to wage war is a revolutionary act of the first importance. Communists are not pacifists, but as responsible revolutionaries they cannot be indifferent to the suffering caused by war; they cannot ignore the terrible destruction and the immense difficulties this creates for the building of socialism. Communists are also aware that nuclear war spells catastrophe for Britain whatever may be the outcome on a world scale.

The establishment of lasting peace can only be the result of intensive struggle against imperialism involving millions and millions of people. Communists see in this its revolutionary significance. Nowadays, as a result of successful socialist and national revolutions, these millions of ordinary people find themselves backed by the organised power of the Governments of the socialist world and the former colonial countries. As a result their voice is heard increasingly in the councils of official international bodies like the United Nations. The changes in that organisation since the end of World War II are in themselves a testimony to the new possibilities for peace which now exist. To seize them and translate them into reality is now a top priority.

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The Early Socialists in Nottingham

Peter Wyncoll

(*The author is an official of the National Union of Public Employees. He is engaged on Open University Post-graduate Research on the History of the Labour Movement in Nottingham.*)

In 1880 very few members of the Nottingham Labour Movement could remember the election of Fergus O'Connor as the town's Chartist M.P. in 1848, and fewer still the burning of the castle in the Reform Bill riots of 1831. It must have seemed to many that Socialism in Britain was almost extinct, suffocated by the development of class collaborationist policies, and weakened by the abandonment of an independent class outlook by leading sections of the Trade Union Movement.

After the failure of the final Chartist petition in 1848 the ideas and ambitions of Socialism had virtually disappeared. Large sections of the organised workers seemed content to become the left wing of the Liberal Party, and the loss of Socialist aims, perspectives, and organisation slowed the political advance of the working class for a long period. The basis for developments like these was of course the strength and resilience of British capitalism. By the 1880's however the dominant position of British industry was being seriously undermined by the rise of new capitalist nations like America and Germany, and it was the threat posed by these countries which helped lead to the revival of Socialism in Britain.

Britain's world supremacy had ended by about 1875. The years which followed were marked by a long series of economic crises. Prices fell, markets became saturated, and profit margins were squeezed. Coinciding with this depression, capitalism developed to the stage of monopoly, with groups of capitalists joining forces to struggle against others, and banks merging with big industry to create finance capital. Parallel with these developments British capitalism turned to Imperialism in an attempt to solve its problems and between 1884 and 1900 three and a half million square miles were added to the British Empire. These events were bound to lead to new developments within the Labour Movement, and by the late 1870's a growing questioning of the existing system amongst the workers led to the revival of Socialist thought.

Predictably enough the crisis of capitalism and the depression which followed brought mass unemployment and misery to wide sections of the working class. In Nottingham as in all other major industrial centres the depression hit skilled workers hard, but its effect on the unskilled was catastrophic. As a result the progressive elements amongst the town's workers began to fight for new policies, and during the 1880's and 1890's organisations like the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist League, and the Independent Labour Party began to be active in creating a great upsurge of working class militancy in the town.

Late Victorian Nottingham

A graphic picture of the late Victorian Nottingham which provided the background against which the town's early Socialists were working is provided by a report in *Commonweal*, the weekly paper of the Socialist League:

> "The pleasure house of the rich, the prison of the poor such is this manufacturing centre of ours. All the sensual delights that are to the bourgeois the only relief from the worry which follows the cares of money getting are here in abundance; and down in the slums, Narrowmarsh, with its dingy lodging houses and narrow courts; the Meadow Platts with their gloomy streets of back to back houses, the poor are penned in grime, squalor and density. The Corporation, packed with friends of Ireland sends its Police clothing to be made in sweaters' shops and has erected a University College which for jerry-building can beat any suburban villa; the School Board which underpays its assistant teachers, and builds an educational system on their bodies as it were; the Board of Guardians full of publicans and small tradesmen, notoriously selected by judicious manipulation of the voting papers, who put skilled workers when unemployed to stone breaking, and build palatial offices and snugly cushioned board rooms, for their own accommodation . . . these are our rulers . . . at the hearing of an election petition a month ago it was proved that dozens of voters were bought for a shilling a piece. . . ."[1]

Certainly in this period Nottingham provided plenty of fertile soil in which the seed sown by the Socialist organisations could thrive. In 1884 *Justice*

[1] *Commonweal*, April 5, 1889.

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the paper of the Social Democratic Federation reported that at a large meeting of the town's unemployed, some said they had not eaten for two days. In April it had reported that the relief work provided by the Corporation was almost ended and that the unemployed were in a very dangerous state of mind. In June *Justice* reported that the position had been made worse by the removal of machines to Scotland where labour could be had at cheaper rates, and in October it carried a report that a committee of the unemployed led by an out-of-work miner waited on the town's municipal candidates to demand work.

A good picture of unemployed life in Nottingham during the 1880's is provided by Henry Snell in his autobiography *Men, Movements and Myself.* As a boy Snell stood for hire in the market square of Newark-on-Trent at the Michaelmas Fair, and after working for a wage of £5 per year as an indoor farm servant, he found his way to Nottingham as a pot-boy in one of the town's public houses. Eventually Snell got a job with a Nottingham french polisher, but when this business failed he suffered long spells of unemployment and impoverishment. During one Christmas in the 1880's, Snell's Christmas dinner consisted of bread and dripping, and it is not surprising that after bitter experiences like this Snell and many more like him responded quickly to the message of the town's early Socialists.

Snell's early contact with working class dissent had come like that of many other rural workers who subsequently migrated to the town, at the door of the blacksmith's shop:

> "I spent many profitable hours listening to the wisdom of those village Hampdens, and I did not count any of them as wasted. Among the subjects constantly discussed were the trial and sentence of the claimant, Sir Roger Tichbourne, and the career and execution of Charles Pearce. Among politicians, 'Dizzy' was criticised, and 'Owd Gladstone' was exalted. Among independent and radical influences there were three or four small workshops in which baskets were made. These were the political and radical centres of the place and those employed in them were Liberals and Radicals to a man. Some of them were local preachers, Sunday school teachers and choir leaders. . . . I spent many profitable hours listening to their talk and they counted among the influences which turned my mind toward political and social ideas."[2]

Later, when working in Nottingham, Snell like many others stopped to hear the speakers who occupied the Market Square in the evenings and on Sundays. The message carried by these outdoor speakers varied from the traditional orthodoxy of Jimmy Dupe, a well known preaching butcher, to the disturbing criticism of the Secularists and early Socialists. Later Snell heard Bradlaugh speaking on Ireland at the town's Alhambra Music Hall. Snell was very impressed by the Secularist leader, and described him as the "most imposing human being I have known". Later he began to attend meetings of the National Secular Society and to read Bradlaugh's *National Reformer.* During the same period he heard Besant, Holyoake, and Edward Aveling at meetings in the town and joined the local Temperance Society. Eventually he made his confession of Socialist faith from the platform of one of the Social Democratic Federation's Market Square meetings, and he soon became a regular SDF speaker.

Open-Air Propaganda

The tradition of open air Socialist evangelising which brought Henry Snell into the ranks of the SDF was at its height in the years at the end of the nineteenth century. In the 1880's the town's Socialists organised meetings as often as three or four times a week. The weekly SDF branch meeting was held in Creswell's Coffee House, but branch members also spoke regularly at meetings in the Market Square, and on Sneinton Market. Many of these meetings were attended by huge crowds and in the middle of 1884 the movement was given added impetus by the announcement that John Burns would become the SDF Parliamentary candidate for West Nottingham.

John Burns had been one of the delegates to the conference of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers held in Nottingham in 1884, and on the Sundays preceding and following the conference Burns spoke as an SDF speaker at Market Square meetings. As a result Burns became the SDF candidate for West Nottingham and between then and the General Election of 1885 he was often in Nottingham. Henry Snell was a young man of about 20 at the time and he took the chair at many of the meetings held by Burns. Naturally, wrote Snell, "we claimed that our candidate was reluctantly bearing the workers' banner at the request of a large number of the downtrodden and impatient electors of the division; but so far as I remember John Peacock, Tom Proctor, Sam Whalley and myself were the only people primarily concerned."[3]

Although the group approaching Burns was a small one, there is no doubt that he was popular with the town's workers. At his first meeting he addressed over a thousand in Sneinton Market Place on Sunday morning and even more at an evening meeting. The following Sunday over 2,000 attended his meeting and over 200 copies of *Justice* were sold. In the week which followed Burns spoke in different

[2] *Men, Movements and Myself.* Henry Snell.

[3] *Men, Movements and Myself.* Henry Snell.

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parts of the town on Monday, Tuesday and Friday, and in July after a meeting at which Burns spoke to 3,000 a resolution was passed in favour of a Labour candidate who, "must go in for a revolutionary programme."[4]

In September, this resolution was followed up. The leading Socialists Proctor, Whalley and Keeling had spoken at a Sunday open air meeting on the subject of "Socialism and Representation" when money was handed up by workers who said they wished to start an election fund for Burns. At the meeting a week later Noble and Proctor spoke on "Labour Representation", and a resolution unanimously in favour of Burns as the SDF candidate was carried. On September 26 a number of Trade Unions organised a great meeting in the Market Square and 4,000 to 5,000 workers packed the square to clap and cheer Burns. After a vote of confidence Burns agreed to stand, and in October he spoke as the candidate at meetings in New and Old Radford, Basford, Bullwell and Hyson Green.

By October the Burns campaign was well under way. *Justice* fully supported Burns, and in late October it ironically reported one of the wealthy Morley family claiming that in Nottingham the "moral condition of the working class was much improved"; this he claimed was due to the presence in the midst of the Nottingham workers of the Nottingham Tabernacle, a religious edifice which enjoyed Morley support. At least, added *Justice*, Morley had the grace not to say anything about the influence the Morley factory and its starvation wages had on the bodies and souls of the Morley workers, and it went on to advise the workers to use the Burns candidature to show the world, "what they think about canting capitalists who steal the worker's labour to put in tabernacle plates".[5]

The Burns Campaign

A large meeting at the beginning of November passed a resolution that, "as the Liberal Union refused to consider a memorial of workingmen asking for a Labour candidate, that Col. Seeley (the Liberal candidate) should retire in favour of the candidate John Burns."[6] Later in the month Burns revealed that he had been approached by the Liberal Party who had visited him to see "if any arrangement could be made for his withdrawal from the contest."[7] Told by Burns that they had come on a fruitless errand the Liberals must have been alarmed at the growth of support for Burns in the town, and there is little doubt that several more attempts were made to buy him off.

By the end of November the SDF had established three branches in the town, all three were holding weekly business meetings, as well as throwing their full weight into the propaganda campaign. Meeting after meeting of the town's workers reiterated their support for Burns and on December 5 a large meeting stood in pouring rain to hear him and the local leadership before passing a vote of confidence and thanks to Burns for the honest way he was fighting for Labour against Capital. This last resolution was probably inspired as an answer to those in the town who were busy alleging that Burns was a paid agent of the Carlton Club sent to Nottingham simply to split the working class vote.

In fact the Burns campaign was being largely financed by the Fabian proprietor of a celebrated soap firm, and Joseph Burgess, the editor of the shortlived *Nottingham Operative*, was able to show in its columns that in fact it was the Liberals who were active in trying to bribe Burns. Writing to Burgess, Burns after dealing with these attempts, concluded that any Liberal visitor to his lodgings would have to go, "through a lively five minutes should he call for express purpose of inducing me to withdraw from the contest, which must and will be fought out to the end."[8] In fact Burns himself seems to have gone through a lively five minutes before speaking to one meeting in the Mechanics Institute. When Burns arrived at the Institute it was noticed that his lips were bleeding. The Chairman explained that the candidate would not be able to speak for long as, since he left home, some villain had struck him in the mouth. In the event it took a lot to silence Burns who proceeded to make an electioneering speech in which he complained that the Liberals were asking his friends in Labour organisations to rebut his candidature. It had been said, he claimed, that he had come to split the vote, but there was no party for the labourers in the field . . . he was called a Tory tool, but would a Tory tool speak as he had done on behalf of the people?

There can be no doubt that the Liberals suffered a serious fright. The town's unemployed had in December paraded the principal streets with a band, and the attendance at the SDF's propaganda meetings continued to grow."[9] By July Burns was speaking to between 4,000 and 6,000 workers in the square and keeping them spellbound for over an hour. By now Burns had issued an Election Address in which he laid down the following ten planks as his platform:

1. Free Education, compulsory on all classes, together with the provision of at least one meal a day in Board Schools.

[4] *Justice*, July 4, 1884.
[5] *Justice*, October 10, 1884.
[6] *Justice*, November 7, 1884.
[7] *Justice*, November 14, 1884.
[8] *John Burns: The Rise and Progress of a Right Honourable*. J. Burgess.
[9] *Justice*, March 13, 1886.

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2. Eight hours or less to be the working day in all trades.
3. Adult Suffrage.
4. Payment of Members and all official expenses at elections.
5. Abolition of the House of Lords and of all hereditary authority.
6. Triennial Parliaments.
7. Legislative Independence for Ireland.
8. Free justice.
9. Nationalisation and Municipalisation of land, mines, railways, machinery and banks.
10. The power of declaring war, making peace, and making treaties to be vested in the people.

The Riot

These principles, he added, he laid before the electors as a Labour candidate and a Social Democrat, in the firm belief that only by a thorough change in the social and political system could the producing classes be benefited. When polling day finally came feeling was running so high in the town that a riot ensued. The police made a great effort to clear the Market Place, and after they had drawn their staves and charged the crowd many were taken to hospital. At 9.00 p.m. the Mayor telegraphed for the Hussars stationed at Leeds, but since there were not enough horse boxes to move the soldiers' mounts, he was forced to send an urgent appeal to Sheffield. Eventually over 100 men of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Regiment arrived in Nottingham where a serious riot was now in progress. Before the night was out a magistrate had been forced to read the Riot Act from the windows of the Exchange building, and running fights between the supporters of the various candidates had spilled from the Market Place into Dilkes Yard and Chapel Bar. When the poll was declared the Liberals had won easily:

Colonel Seeley (Lib)	6,609
E. Cope (Con)	3,797
John Burns (Soc)	598

So ended the first provincial campaign of the Social Democratic Federation. In August, the Sixth Annual Conference of the SDF received a report that, "the candidature of Burns at Nottingham thoroughly permeated the town with Socialism and our Comrade would undoubtedly have obtained a much larger number of votes had it not been for the lying reports concerning him which the Liberals set about on polling day."[10] Despite the respectable and hard won vote achieved by Burns the town's Socialists were still a long way from returning a successful candidate of their own and a great deal more propaganda would have to be done before this aim was achieved.

Two years after the 1885 election campaign the town's Socialists were still fighting for the things in which they believed, and the social background against which the struggle was taking place was just as grim. In August 1887 the *Nottingham Express* wrote:

> "In this year of the Jubilee, there is a good deal of suffering in Nottingham from want of employment and there are many more than is generally supposed, living on miserable pittances, in the hope of a better living. Living . . . no existing on earnings which are barely sufficient to keep body and soul together."[11]

Faced by conditions like this it is not surprising that the local Socialists paid a good deal of attention to the problem of unemployment. In February two excellent open air meetings on "Socialism and the Unemployed" and the "Right to Live" were held, and the outdoor propaganda work amongst those out of work was bringing new recruits into the town's growing Labour Movement. In March, the local Socialists celebrated the anniversary of the Paris Commune with a tea and ball held in the Secular Hall. Speeches on the Commune were delivered by Whalley, Cooper, and Proctor in English, and by Detre in French. The Marseillaise was sung in French by Coutoux, and songs and recitations were given. Among the decorations was a red banner inscribed "Vive la Commune" and as mottoes the names of Hyndman, Morris, Delescluze and Dombrowski. After singing the *Marseillaise* in chorus the meeting was brought to an end with three cheers for the Commune.

Tensions

Underneath fraternal feeling of this sort however the traditional tensions of the Left were as obvious in Nottingham as in any other area. These tensions were reflected in a series of open air meetings during July which dealt with the rival claims of reform and revolution. This debate probably reflected the fact that the SDF had been losing members to the Socialist League, and other Left Wing organisations. In August the SDF in its Annual Report included an item which recorded that although the Nottingham branch still held together a group of energetic workers, local differences and intrigues meant that propaganda was not spreading as well as could be wished. By October however the SDF had opened a new clubroom in the town, and *Justice* was able to report that, "our old comrades Peacock, Knight, and others have rejoined the SDF and we intend to start on active propaganda at once."[12]

[10] *Justice*, August 7, 1886.

[11] *Nottingham Express*, June 18, 1887.

[12] *Justice*, October 18, 1887.

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True to their word the SDF group immediately called a special meeting to condemn the murder of the Chicago anarchists, and followed this a fortnight later with two meetings to further the candidature of Whalley who was being put forward by the Labour Representation Association to contest Wollaton Ward in the Municipal elections. The fight facing Whalley was a difficult one, and not surprisingly he lost:

Smith (Liberal)	1,292
Whalley (SDF)	287

Although this result was a poor one, the local group were not downhearted, and at the tea party held to celebrate Whalley's election fight the clubroom was "crowded to excess". Some idea of the difficulties facing the Socialists in trying to return a candidate of their own can be gleaned from the report in *Justice* covering the election:

> "though we did not poll many the result is encouraging considering the conditions under which we fought. Our opponent was a publican, and had the support of any number of Aldermen and town councillors. Having plenty of money he well advertised his meetings and held them in nice comfortable school rooms, we having scarcely any money, and not more than seven or eight workers had to hold our meetings in the open air on the bitterly cold nights, besides crying the meeting ourselves with a bell. Wollaton Ward is the worst possible ward we could have contested, being dominated entirely by the Liberal caucus. The people agreed with our comrade and even admitted that he was the best man, but they objected to him because he had not come through the legitimate channel."[13]

The reference in this report to the "Liberal caucus" is an indication of the firm grip still held by the Liberals on a large section of the working class vote. Money and influence were still all important in local as well as national politics, and the dedication of the early Socialists was by itself not enough to smash the machine of the Conservative and Liberal parties. Although they found it difficult to break the psychological grip which the Liberal party in particular had on the minds of large numbers of working class voters, the Socialists could still draw huge crowds to their propaganda meetings, and a joint SDF-Socialist League meeting in November drew over 2,000 workers to a meeting which was significant, since it seems to have been the first joint meeting of the two major Socialist groupings.

The Socialist League

The first signs of Socialist League influence in Nottingham date from December 1886 when *Commonweal* the League's weekly paper appointed a sales agent in the town. Nine months later a meeting in the town unanimously passed a resolution deciding to form a branch of the League in Nottingham. Once the group was in being, it immediately embarked on its own propaganda campaign. In the first week of October, Proctor (an ex-member of the SDF) addressed an enthusiastic meeting of Clifton miners on, "Labour Organisation", and a week later the group moved to new, more convenient premises in the centre of the town, which they opened as a nightly clubroom.

Of the Socialist groups active in the 1880's the Socialist League under the influence of William Morris and Edward Carpenter took the lead in placing a great deal of emphasis on the drabness of ordinary workers' lives, and in demanding a real improvement in the quality of people's lives. Something of the atmosphere of a Socialist League meeting can be gathered from Henry Snell's autobiography, in which after telling of the tremendous influence which Edward Carpenter had on him, he remembers:

> "my early acquaintance with him centres round memories of a Sunday fellowship meeting held at Ambergate midway between Nottingham, Sheffield, and Leicester . . . crowded into a local Inn where Carpenter played the piano and we sang the best known Socialist songs."[14]

Later Snell recalls:

> "small bands of young crusaders including myself carried the glad tidings to the 'heathen' living outside the borough . . . our practise was to ride out on a penny farthing from the saddle of which, the machine being kept in the perpendicular by comrades standing either side, I and others preached the gospel."[15]

The fervour of Snell and his comrades looked at with the cynicism of the present day, is difficult to understand until one realises that underpinning the beliefs of the early Socialists was the certainty in their minds that radical change was not far off. The leading SDF speakers underlined this view in October by choosing as their subject for a series of open air meetings, "The Coming Revolution" and the Sunday evening discussions in the group's clubroom were full of certainty that the Socialist Revolution was very close.

The Socialist League's great contribution to the Socialist Movement was its vision of a great co-operative commonwealth, The emphasis which it placed on the cultural poverty to which large

[13] *Justice*, November 19, 1887.

[14] *Men, Movements and Myself*. Henry Snell.

[15] *Men, Movements and Myself*. Henry Snell.

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sections of the working class were sentenced by the capitalist system was tremendously valuable, and something of its tone can be gleaned from the Nottingham group's autumn lecture programme which included William Morris speaking to 250 on "Art and the Working Class", a meeting on "Monopoly", and a meeting in the Secular Hall at which Morris lectured on "The Origin of Ornamental Art."

This emphasis on the quality of life naturally led many of the group into working with the town's unemployed, and at a meeting in April 1889 Peacock roundly denounced the sweating of teachers by the Nottingham School Board. Stirring attacks like this, coupled with the decision of the town's lace manufacturers to reduce wages by 40 per cent helped to bring recruits into the Socialist organisations and in June 1889 *Commonweal* reported that several new members had joined the group and that things were beginning to move. Later in the month it reported that the Nottingham group was progressing satisfactorily both financially and numerically, and that it had been decided to run Peacock, Proctor and Whalley as Socialist candidates in the November School Board elections.

Socialist Alliance

Since Whalley was a member of the SDF this election represented an alliance between the Socialist League and the Social Democratic Federation. This had been cemented in July by a joint excursion to Charnwood Forest. The members of the various groups proceeded in horse brakes with much waving of red flags and the singing of the *Marseillaise*. After dinner and tea at a farm house a single innings cricket match was played between "Socialists v Secularists" in which the former scored 67 to win the match against their opponents' 46. Sensibly the Socialist alliance was maintained in day to day propaganda work, and by August both groups were active in supporting a lace makers strike, and in helping the gas-stokers and other unskilled workers to organise themselves into a trade union.

In November Annie Besant arrived to speak in the Secular Hall on "Education", and later she helped to inaugurate the Socialists' School Board election campaign at a Market Square meeting. Later in the month three meetings were held each night for a week prior to polling day, and these propaganda meetings helped to push up the Socialist vote by 2,000 over the vote they had recorded in 1886. Although no socialist candidate was returned Peacock recorded 14,176 votes whilst Proctor achieved 10,276. In December Proctor opened a series of indoor meetings with a talk on the "Unskilled Labour Movement" before the old year was seen out with a tea party and the singing of Socialist songs.

During 1888 John Burns again visited Nottingham to renew the contacts which he had made during his earlier election campaign, and to help the town's Socialists in their propaganda campaign. Writing in his diary Burns noted:

> "went to Nottingham, arrived 4.30 p.m. Met by Whalley and Clarke. Town very depressed, many out of work. Measuring the poverty of the town by what I saw in the streets and Market Place, I should say there was 40 per cent less money being spent than two years ago. Women and girls busy at work displacing their husbands, brothers, and sweethearts. . . ."[16]

On the Sunday morning following this entry Burns spoke to 2,000 at an SDF meeting in Sneinton Market whilst in the evening he spoke to an estimated 6,000 in the Market Place before visiting the SDF members in their club. At the discussion which took place in the clubroom, Burns notes in his diary that the Nottingham members expressed themselves as being in favour of amalgamation with other Socialist bodies, and this note helps to underline the impression that although the town was undoubtedly affected by the arguments and conflicts sponsored by national personalities, at local level a good deal of co-operation was possible between different groups.

Burns left Nottingham at midnight on Monday July 2, and arrived in London on the same train as Bradlaugh, but before leaving the town he had noted in his diary an amusing account of the meetings which helps to capture the atmosphere of the outdoor propaganda meetings at which so many early Socialists learnt the art of public speaking:

> "in the morning at Sneinton Market an Irishman, a very voluble speaker was speaking to a large crowd prior to our meeting. When we started his audience rapidly diminished. Making a virtue of necessity he closed what was left to hear me. Getting on the platform when I had finished he made a sentimental speech with little in it. Although he flattered our speech and speakers I could see he was annoyed. This showed itself at the later meeting at night in the big Market Place. When I reached the Market at 7.30 p.m. people ran around him, hundreds were walking about. When our Chairman started they commenced to gather round us, the Irishman all the time making tremendous efforts to hold his audience. When the Chairman announced me the audience began to leave him. As my voice (purposefully high) was heard a stampede took place. Much to his disgust he was left talking to but a few. I ought to be ashamed, he said, for stealing his audience etc., etc. It then became a question of lung power. I told him that unless he had a voice like a double barrelled fog horn he had better abandon the struggle. He persisted for a minute and then collapsed. The last I

[16] *John Burns' Diary*, BM46310.

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saw of him he was tearing up his notes like one possessed and excitably pacing to and fro. The audience yelled with laughter at the easy surrender of the rival . . . a sporting man in the audience, to disconcert me, then bellowed out, 'who will win the Leger': much to his discomfiture I replied, 'the horse that is ridden by a rogue, owned by a knave, and paid for by fools like you'. He retired".[17]

Like the other Socialist leaders of the time Burns drew much of his support from the ranks of the unemployed and the unskilled, and the concern for the plight of these groups which showed itself at so many of the town's Socialist meetings was reflected again in May 1890 when Tom McCarthy spoke to huge meetings in the town on "My Experience In The Great Dock Strike" before leading with local Socialists a great Trade Union demonstration in nearby Long Eaton.

Women Workers' Plight

From this concern with the under-privileged flowed too a natural concern for the plight of woman workers, well reflected in this *Commonweal* account of the daily life of the town's working women:

"All sorts of minor tyrannies are imposed to break the spirit of the workers and render them docile serfs. The forewomen are selected especially for their ability to 'nag' and 'drive' the hands. One Nottingham factory manager occasionally strolls down the room, and if one of the women should turn her head to glance at the majestic passer-by she is instantly dismissed. This gentleman is a prominent Liberal and Churchwarden, and his master, an MP, who inherits the virtues of a pious Father (Morley), is to be the Almighty's principal instrument in returning Mr. Gladstone back to office at the General Election. In several large warehouses the girls are obliged to come half an hour earlier in the morning to hear some hired parson preach and pray at them. One of these sky-pilots had the impudence to denounce his hearers because of the few ribbons they had obtained. The managers, sub-managers and chief clerks use their power to seduce girls and then to cast them adrift. The gilded youth of two counties make Nottingham their pleasure-house and the army of despair which lounges round the 'Clarendon', the 'Three Crowns' or that glorified gin-palace known as the 'Talbot' is recruited from the weaker sisters of the warehouse. The result is a social ulcer which permeates the bourgeois in spite of all efforts to conceal it. One hears of Aldermen slipping up back streets to brothels, or the disappearance of an inconvenient witness in a police prosecution because her evidence might compromise members of the Town Council, or the pillar of society who is said to have a kept woman in almost every street, and who now turns up at missionary meetings. Our MP's are a curious medley worthy of their supporters; Broadhurst who has sold and betrayed the workers like the Judas he is; Morley the superior person; and Smith-Wright a jingo banker. Not one has an idea above the level of the grocers shop, and not one cares two pins for the welfare of the workers."[18]

To get away from this grim background the Socialist groups in the town enjoyed getting out into the countryside and in June 1890 after a ramble to Stoke Ferry, delegates from Sheffield, Leicester, Chesterfield, Derby, Newark and Long Eaton met with Nottingham representatives to form an East Midlands Federation. After this meeting a joint demonstration in the Market Place with two platforms drew between 3,000 and 4,000. A month later the annual picnic visited Charnwood and an enjoyable day was spent rambling among the bracken and foxgloves, mounting the rocks and trespassing in the woods in defiance of "law and order".

Back in the town however unemployment and poverty remained a tremendous problem, and Proctor in particular continued with his efforts to organise the unskilled labour in Nottingham. In 1891 however Proctor together with another leading Socialist Whalley, left the town, and *Justice* reported that the movement in the town was flagging as a result. Two successful meetings in September however provided a fresh start, and the SDF reported that the Trades Council was beginning to play an important part in local agitation, and these links were to be well demonstrated in the development of the local branch of the Independent Labour Party.

If the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League had been the first truly Socialist organisations to try to recruit the town's working class, it was the ILP which drew many threads together, and which in the 1890's took the first steps towards achieving an organised mass working class political party. Building on the foundations laid by the SDF and the Socialist League the ILP by early 1894 had begun to erect a formidable machine. The *Labour Leader*, the ILP's weekly, reported that the first Nottingham celebration of May Day had been a great success with over 50,000 present at the rally. Later in the month Tom Mann whilst on a visit to the town was able to start a branch of the ILP at Stapleford, and his influence amongst Nottingham's railwaymen was considerable after he had spoken to them at the Hucknall and Netherfield depots.

ILP Activities

During June 1894, the Quarterly meeting of the Administrative Council of the ILP met at the Trent Ward club run by the town's ILP members. Keir Hardie was in the chair at this meeting which lasted

[17] *John Burns' Diary*, BM46310.

[18] *Commonweal*, May 24, 1890.

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for seven hours. At the social which followed he was asked if there was any truth in the rumour of an ILP alliance with the Liberals. Putting a fresh light to his pipe, Hardie "smiled in his own quiet way, and put an end to questions, before leading off in the first polka, much to the amazement of his friends who had not dreamt that tripping the light fantastic was in his line."[19]

In the months which followed the ILP organised a cyclist lecturing campaign to capture the surrounding villages, and after Tom Mann had held rousing meetings branches were formed at Arnold, Hucknall, Netherfield, Beeston and Carlton. Later Pete Curran came to Nottingham for a week of meetings, and the group began to grow very rapidly through the medium of propaganda meetings, as well as by immediately identifying themselves with groups of workers in struggle, as for instance when during a strike of Rotary Power Framework Knitters, the ILP immediately organised a series of factory gate meetings which went a long way toward convincing local workers of their sincerity.

Edward Aveling spoke at two outdoor meetings in the town in July and both were remembered as amongst the most powerful and thrilling speeches ever heard in Nottingham. Writing in 1934 Robert Meats who acted as Aveling's chairman remembered:

> "he was little in stature and elderly, but his power, his voice, his fluency, and the richness of his addresses generally so impressed me that I must place him bang in the front rank of Socialist propagandists. At one of his meetings, when there must have been two thousand or more people present, I know that the collection was a record for an outdoor meeting. . . . Dr. Aveling's evening subject was entitled 'Masters and Men', and I do not exaggerate when I say one could fancy seeing the forces of Capitalism and Labour marching in opposition to each other, in the vivid exposition of society's rottenness, as given by the doctor."[20]

In the same month Enid Stacey visited the town, and thousands turned out nightly to be bewitched by her eloquence. Robert Meats remembered one of her meetings well:

> "she had a great crowd of listeners, and an elderly gentleman, an evangelist well known as Jimmy Dupe, who always when fine, held a Sunday morning service in the Market Place. He sometimes had on his platform a reformed gentleman named William Thompkin, but much better known as Bendigo the prizefighter. Dupe must have got a bit perturbed at seeing so many people at our meeting, for when he closed his meeting down he came around to ours and shouted as loud as he could, 'Ah you are fast going to the Devil'. Certainly Jimmy was sincere enough in his methods and beliefs, but he cannot have given much thought to the Brotherhood of Man question. . . ."[21]

By this time the ILP had over 700 members in the town and some idea of its strength can be gauged by the fact that it spent £3 on buying penny copies of Blatchford's *Merrie England*. By October 1894 the group felt strong enough to run its own candidates for the Town Council and fielded six candidates in the local elections. Although no ILP member was successful in these elections the group did win 24 per cent of the total poll in a three cornered fight, and shortly afterwards ILP candidates were elected to the Parish Councils at Colwick and Gunthorpe, so that at the huge smoker concert held in the Mechanics Institute, at which the year was seen out with the singing of "England Arise", the ILP could clearly congratulate itself on significant progress.

Weaknesses

Despite this progress however, the ILP had within it serious flaws which prevented it from becoming the British workers' socialist Party. Its lack of theory meant that many of its leaders rejected the idea of class struggle, and organisational defects meant that its branches were held together only by the personality of its leading members. Certainly in Nottingham many new recruits came to it potential Marxists, but the group's emphasis on propaganda alone meant that many of them became committed to a concept of social change only slightly more advanced than the basic theory of the Fabians. Pervaded as it was by the religious fervour which the ILP inherited from the working class tradition of nonconformism, the ILP's theoretical weakness rested on easy bedfellow with middle-class reformism, and in Nottingham as elsewhere these elements were soon in the ascendent.

The nonconformism which played such an important part in the ILP was also part of the motivation of the founders of the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society, an organisation which has played a central role in the lives of generations of Nottingham Socialists (including mine). This society which dates from the 1890's was founded as an adjunct to the town's Labour Church which at the time was a mixture of Socialism and organised religion. During its early years the Society's meetings were always prefaced with prayer. Invariably the same fervent prayer was used, but on the occasion when Keir Hardie paid the Society a visit, the chairman introduced just one extra word as additional emphasis in his appeal, so that it ran:

[19] *The Labour Leader*, June 2, 1894.
[20] *Nottingham Forward*, November 1934.
[21] *Nottingham Forward*, November 1934.

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> "O, Lord, may the words of the speaker sink deep into the hearts of his hearers, and may they all go away from here realising the truth of his words. And may they O Lord, be so impressed as not to suffer to be further BAMBOOZLED."[22]

That Keir Hardie saw no incongruity in addressing a meeting of Socialists which had begun with a prayer, helps to explain the particular nature of the British Labour Movement. Indeed it represents part of its tragedy. For the movement at the end of the nineteenth century was only too easily bamboozled, partly by the first phase of an imperialist boom, but more importantly by an amalgam of the worst elements of nonconformism and the cancer of Fabian philosophy which played such an important part in influencing the new generation of working class political and trade union leaders. Thus, when the great upsurge of the 1880's and 1890's began to die away, the old ideas of Liberal bourgeois reformism reasserted themselves in a form adapted to the level which the working class political and industrial organisations had reached.

Despite the intellectual defeat which the Marxists suffered in the struggle for the leadership of the Labour Movement their contribution to the growth of the Movement in the years at the end of the nineteenth century was a tremendous one. They were part of a long Nottingham tradition which went back to the readers of Tom Paine, a century before, through Chartism, and the town's branch of the First International. Nottingham had won its reputation as a leading centre of working class activity in these early years. Through the 1880's and 1890's this reputation was not only maintained but increased. This was the measure of the achievement of Nottingham's early Socialists.

[22] *The History of the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society* (1916), William Robinson.

Discussion Contributions on:

Opportunities in the present situation

Mick Costello

Many people believe that the working class movement is facing the most virulent attack from the Government for more than a century. Many believe that they are witnessing more open erosion of the social services, and that the brutality with which the Government is attacking standards of living has not been seen for a long time. Nothing among the traditional advantages that British workers considered they had won over virtually every other section of workers in a capitalist country seems exempt from attack. Food prices are rocketing while wages are held back; rents have gone through the ceiling; dental and medical care are not to be taken for granted—they are now largely paid for; the first days of sickness are no longer compensated for by state health insurance, and so on.

Tory and Right Wing Labour

People are correct to see this Government as a more open expression of bourgeois class rule, with more direct methods than we have had for years. But many people begin to go wrong when they attach too much importance to the individual characters who make up the Government, in an attempt to suggest that the brutality has something to do with the personalities of Edward Heath, John Davies, Peter Walker or Maurice Macmillan and the like.

It does have "something to do with this" but that is not the important question. After all, it is true that the same attacks, in their essentials and in the same directions, were made on the working people by the previous Right-wing Labour government. Labour government, led by Harold Wilson, pushed up rents, introduced the first medical charges, put a price on school milk and tried to hold down wages through an incomes policy. So much is held in common by both governments, although one could go through the intellectual exercise of discussing the variations in degree and method between them. All

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this suggests an underlying community of purpose between the Tories and Right-wing Labour.

And there is one—to solve Britain's economic problems without challenging the social system which has given rise to the problems.

For people who hope to live through a change in social system from capitalism to socialism in Britain, these are indeed exciting times. For years socialists (not those who have borrowed the word to cloak their essentially Liberal ideas within the Labour Party) have argued that public ownership and control of the means of production, together with other essential features of a socialist economic system, are more desirable than capitalism.

What is new today, and which presents a potential for radical social change such as has not been available since the early days of capitalism, is that all those who try to make capitalism work (and more palatable to the majority of the people) now admit that hard-won rights have to be surrendered by the people in the process. These rights, we are told, are now considered luxuries to be foregone—capitalism cannot tolerate them. They are barriers to the continued existence of the system of private enterprise.

In recent years successive governments have sought to solve capitalism's growing economic problems. In doing this they have found it impossible to avoid resorting increasingly to repressive measures. These, anti-union laws, the use of Acts of Parliament designed specifically to raise the level of profit for the minority of owners of industry at the expense of wage packets, had not previously been necessary in Britain, and are not, consequently, accepted forms for regulating the economy, within the traditional experience of either the ruling or working class.

The "Subjective Factor"

Socialists in Britain, and foremost among them Communists, have argued that Britain has long been ripe for socialism. They have talked of this as the "objective factor" necessary for a social transformation. It has been argued that the radical social changes have not taken place because they have not been sufficiently supplemented by another essential prerequisite for this—the "subjective factor". By this is meant an accepted revolutionary leadership from a revolutionary organisation which is capable of leading the fight for the change in social order.

All well and true, but coupling the objective and subjective factors (as they are described above) on their own still does not create all the necessary conditions for social (revolutionary) change. If the objective factor is present and all that is required in the subjective one then, one might quite legitimately ask: why does the second not exist? Why is it not sufficiently stimulated by the presence of the first? After all, we have an experienced Communist Party of 52 years standing which has no rival for leadership of the revolutionary struggle in Britain. At the point of production it really does not even have a competitor.

Too often the answer to these questions is sought in introspective examination of the working practices and methods of the Party. Is the Party going the right way about things? Could not this or that alteration in policy or change in image, organisation or personnel, tilt the balance sufficiently to produce a correct marriage between the objective and subjective conditions which are thought essential? These questions are asked and debated within most branches in the run-up to Party congresses.

No one would deny that improvements in all these could and must be made. I would, in fact, argue that changes to improve Party work are now more important than ever, but not only for the reasons suggested above. They are now so essential precisely because there is a third precondition for radical social change which has not been taken due account of in everything so far said. Yet, without this, however well organised the revolutionary leadership may be, there will not be a revolution for it to lead.

Capitalist Crisis Deepens

The third factor is developing in *the growing inability for the rule of capital to be maintained in the old way*, in the way most people are accustomed to experiencing it. It has not had to show its true brutal and undemocratic nature for a considerable time. Now it is as if a false note has crept into the music of the spheres, which is making it audible to people for the first time.

Without *the ruling class itself* having to force people in their millions to question what the rulers themselves had always previously said, there can be no chance of radical social transformation. Yet this is what is happening today in Britain, as its capitalist system goes deeper and deeper into crisis. No-one can any longer pretend that capitalism can continue, or is now continuing, to govern in the same old way. It is being forced to throw overboard many of the very arguments which it used to justify its own existence.

The weakened position of British imperialism, relative to other advanced capitalist countries in the sharply competitive circumstances of the scientific and technological revolution, is forcing Britain's rulers to rationalise, and this it wants to do at the expense of the standard of living of the working people.

Today things are rapidly changing. New methods of ruling, including the attempts to outlaw the strike weapon, are being fought for by the bourgeoisie,

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through Parliament and with the aid of the State machine, the courts in the first instance and with Right-wing Labour connivance. Capitalism is facing a crisis as never before. The gloomy forecasts of a standard of living on a par with Spain in a number of years time is only one of the indicators of where succumbing to the new methods will lead the working people. Of course, capitalists in Spain, whatever the problems the working class has to face, are expected to do at least as profitably as now, and that means as well as those in America or Britain.

One knows the kind of "political democracy" which is needed to maintain the ruling class in power in the economic conditions of a country like Spain.

And so, real problems are forcing the British ruling class to use new, repressive methods against the working class. *It is at times like these when the rulers are having to look for new ways to rule, that they are at their most vulnerable.*

Values Rejected

By the very process of initiating changes, they themselves undermine the masses' belief in traditional values. Yet they have depended on the acceptance of these self-same values (which are so often myths) to maintain themselves in the saddle, to keep their grip on the State machine. The stability of a social system depends not only on the naked power of the State machine to defend its masters, but also on acquiescence in this from the bulk of the people, especially in a developed industrial country such as Britain.

Thus, in a certain sense, the rulers of Britain today are forced to agree with those who challenge their right to rule. Both say "Things cannot continue as before". The battle is opened in a new way between the two parties—over what should come next. It may be objected that this is an exaggeration. After all, it may be said, the bourgeoisie does not in fact raise the question of the suitability of capitalism itself to continue. But this is only partly true when it comes to looking at the battle for the minds of the people. For the bourgeoisie has always pretended that the way it rules, the forms its rule takes are intrinsic to capitalism itself in Britain. Who has not heard the argument that, well, maybe things like radical changes can happen in France or Spain, or fascism might be able to win in Germany or Italy, but Britain is different—look at our democracy. Now the bourgeoisie is having to propagate the idea of change, of curtailing democracy, and to an extent which is beyond the experience of living generations.

The bourgeoisie had propagated the idea that in Britain *democracy itself meant* **their** *form of Parliamentary democracy*, with its two-party system; that individual freedom was not real unless it took the form it took in Britain; that industrial democracy meant free collective bargaining; that the Commonwealth necessarily meant freedom of movement for all citizens within it; that a decent standard of living necessarily involved a cheap food policy, and so on and so forth. It was a mixture of defending ideas that were truly its own, and others which were forced upon it and which it had sought to modify, incorporate and emasculate.

Now all these "eternal truths" which until recently only socialists argued were transitory forms of capitalist rule and applied in the particular circumstances of British imperialism, are being ditched by the very people (the bourgeoisie and Right-wing Labour) who elevated them into "principles" which could allegedly only be altered with the end of democracy and freedom.

Right-wing Labour is joining the spokesmen of the ruling class in denigrating the freedoms that have been won by the working class. They are especially vocal in arguing that collective bargaining has never been "free" and that, therefore, the question confronting the movement now is whether to have this "lack of freedom" formalised by the Tories or by the Labour movement itself.

At the May annual congress of the General and Municipal Workers' Union Mr. Derek Gladwin, speaking for the executive, and arguing for a lasting incomes policy with all the paraphernalia of a corporate State, after suggesting that "intervention" in collective bargaining was inevitable said: "If intervention is inevitable, then let it be intervention by our own people."

Yet the change away from traditional arguments by the bourgeoisie is creating enormous problems for it and divisions among its members. Thus, the chairman of the employers' Confederation of British Industry was recently replaced; the Tory party is split on many issues—the Common Market and statutory incomes policy being among the major questions; unable to maintain unity in face of the engineering workers, the Engineering Employers' Federation is under great stress and affiliated firms are concluding separate agreements with workers in their employ, outside the federation's range of control; the fear of the consequences of tough political measures against the working class is making the Tories dither, trying first one approach and then another, and, in the process, weakening their appeal to the masses as a credible Government. Despite the Government's public commitment to an expanding economy, there are the first signs that circumstances and its own logic are pushing it once more towards a stop-go economic policy.

At such a time as this, when the bourgeoisie is throwing many questions into the melting pot of discussion, socialists must pitch in with the answers which demonstrate that only a set of priorities radically different from those of capitalist pro-

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duction and ownership, can get Britain out of its mess without the working class paying the price. It must be forcefully argued that this can be done only if it is to be the bourgeoisie that must pay the price for the rottenness of its system, not the working people. This, I think, is crucial for the labour movement. This is all the more so as it certainly cannot be ruled out that capitalism will solve even its current problems in the way it wants to and in which it has been successful so far—by getting the workers to tighten their belts. But one thing is certain, the bourgeoisie cannot do this without the co-operation of the leaders of the labour movement and it knows this. So the challenge today is also a challenge to the movement's leaders.

Right-wing Labour

Yet, as in earlier times of difficulties, it is the leaders, of the movement in the Trades Union Congress General Council and in most trade unions who are rushing to the rescue of the bourgeoisie. This is the true meaning of the "tripartite" discussions between trade union leaders, on the one hand, and the Confederation of British Industry and its Tory Government, on the other. This, also, is the true significance of the leaders of the Labour Party's intentions to introduce their own incomes policy when they get back into Government—"as long as it is fair", i.e. fair within the system of capitalism, "fair" to those who work for a living, and "fair" to those who don't.

So far most trade union leaders have been content to react against the Tory incomes policy only when their members have felt the results of it. So it was during the Labour Government's incomes policy and that of the Tories last year. There is a practical impotence even when it comes to acting on the TUC's own resolutions against wage restraint under an economy which cannot plan for the benefits of the people which will not redistribute wealth to the benefit of working people. The leaders go to discuss with Mr. Heath even when the CBI has clearly indicated that there must be a movement of money from wage packets to profits, to shareholders. They fear the accusation that they would have to face the prospect of challenging Parliamentary democracy as it is practised by the leaders of the Labour and Conservative parties. A practice whereby the election of a Parliamentary majority (no matter what lies and false promises were made to the people in order to secur it) gives that majority the right to five years' rule as it pleases, no matter what the people think.

That attitude has nothing in common with rule by the people. It is an illusion, and one fostered by the bourgeoisie. The Tories have initiated their series of talks with trade union leaders not in order to consult with them on how to come up with the answers to Britain's ills which would most closely correspond to meeting the needs of the mass of working people, but to involve the trade union leaders in their own plans for hammering the people.

Some say that a refusal to co-operate with these Tory exercises would lay the TUC open to charges that it is negative, lacking in its own solutions and irresponsible. It is true that even with TUC visits to Downing Street and Chequers these charges have been made because the TUC men have put forward demands for at least some protection against the savage onslaughts against their members which they are asked to subscribe to.

Facing Reality

Only by facing reality and launching a massive campaign, involving the Labour and Communist Parties, the unions and trades councils and all the mass organisations which involve people in struggles for a better life (on pensions, for better housing, against attacks on democratic rights, and so on) can the Tory challenge be faced. It helps to have the defeats for parts of Tory policy, such as when the miners won their pay victory last year, but more is wanted to force an end to the Tory strategy.

A defeat for the wages, housing and Common Market policies could be made possible by refusal to accept the State wage regulation policies and the operations of the Industrial Relations Act in any detail and at any place. The prospects for social change which would then be opened up are difficult to over-estimate. In the process of the fight the appearance that the foundations of private rule in Britain are everlasting would be shattered.

In such circumstances of sharpened class struggle, there can be no doubt that open recourse to fascist-type methods of rule would be attempted by the ruling-class, and that the movement would also throw up disruptive ultra-Left bodies such as those which help to sabotage the unity necessary for social transformation today as in Chile or France.

But a defeat for incomes policy and the legislative onslaughts on the trade union movement would open the prospects of winning the mass of the British working people for radical transformation, to lay the way open to socialism.

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Marxism and the Family: On the Dialectics of Biology

Sylvia Thyer

A superficial examination of the history of ideas might lead the average extra-terrestial to the conclusion that biology is an artifact—an ideological weapon, not only for the maintainance of the status quo, but more often called into being for the rationalisation of new and nastier forms of oppression. Just as the theory of natural selection was converted to Social Darwinism in the last century to justify inhuman industrial practices which would have caused traditional oligarchies to shudder, similarly a distortion of the science of genetics has been used to condone racism in this century, first against Jews and Slavs and more recently, against populations roughly described as Black.

Pseudo-Biology

Equally, every piece of data concerning sexual dimorphism, hormonal or otherwise, has been used by someone to block female participation in any form of self-determination. Most recently, the findings of the elementary biologic needs of the infant have been used to turn babies into a kind of reactionary vanguard of small domestic jailors. To defend itself against this new treachery, the women's liberation movement has almost been pushed into the position of an anti-baby-league—a paradoxical stance in grave danger of being cut off from social reality.

It is hardly surprising that a deep growl arises from the Sisterhood at any mention of woman's biologic role. During centuries of ignorance of female physiology, a purely metaphysical biology has invariably been erected by men as an excuse to preserve a form of sexual segregation originally established to serve military goals, but so deeply entrenched as to have become second nature. There is no need to enumerate the techniques of petty oppression based upon mythical pseudo-biology that are built into the family structure. All this has been done with panache by the new-wave sisters, but so far, unfortunately, without the scientific backing which would enable them to replace pseudo-science by fact.

Since the blacking of an actual science rather than of its misuse can only be harmful, it is important for women and radicals in general to obtain accurate information as a means of combatting corrupt usage.

Dalton's Data

For example, if women have cyclical irregularities in physical endurance, emotional stability or intellectual creativity, the understanding of these cycles can lead only to greater efficiency, and suppression of knowledge to blockage in communication, to injustice and mismanagement. Katerina Dalton's exposition of women's weaknesses in her invaluable book *The Menstrual Cycle* is a little unfortunate, because her medical bias leads her to concentrate exclusively on the pathology of harmonic imbalance, the situations in which the extremes of hormone action can be equated with illness. Dr. Dalton produces incontrovertible evidence that schoolgirls give subnormal performance during the menstrual period, that the pre-menstrual tension of mothers has a detrimental effect on child-health and encourages lateness and absenteeism among husbands. The result is a top-heavy picture of female inadequacy.

As a doctor and not a social theorist, Dr. Dalton has little to say on the subject of the male framework of educational, industrial and even domestic establishments which turn female norms into examples of inefficient masculinity; but she is excellent within the restrictions of her field and the absolute value of her findings should not be underestimated. Without her data on academic/menstrual discrepancies, we should have no scientific evidence for the hypothesis that students who fail at a certain point of the internal clock have in fact a higher general potential. We now need to go further, to test for highest monthly performance, and learn to adjust female timetables accordingly. If it is now proven that a marked sexual difference exists on a time basis, justice demands that we readjust education and employment appropriately.

In our present state of ignorance, Dalton's data are only too likely to pass into the armoury of those with a vested interest in sexual discrimination. It is extremely important to add to

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this data the work of certain Soviet women scientists, who while working on preparation for childbirth, discovered serendipitously that some of their number were able to exert voluntary control over the timing of both menstruation and childbirth in the interest of sitting for professional examinations. They also experimented with alert and conscious control of prenatal labour in contrast to the male-dictated infantile relaxation techniques of the West. The publications of these scientists, though translated into English, are for some reason unobtainable in this country.

Animals and Man

At present, an entire new science, ethology, lies under a cloud of suspicion, based partly upon its reductionist assessment of human qualities in the light of non-human mainly primate behaviour. But it is possible that the distortion of the human image involved is not the work of the scientists themselves, but, as in the case of the Social Darwinists, of those who have vested interests in reducing human values. A clear view of animal behaviour does not lead one to an underestimation of *homo sapiens*, or even of the animals themselves. Truly, rat-races are not for people, but neither have they any part in Nature's Social Union. Rats have in fact been proved not to rat on their class. In a recent experiment it was shown that a rat who can obtain a food-pellet only by pressing a lever which simultaneously causes pain to a comrade visible in an adjoining cell, will prefer to starve.

Still less is ape-psychology for people. We are not naked apes, nor sex-preoccupied apes, nor pair-bonded apes, nor super-aggressive apes. We are a highly organised, self-selected, communistic species, with the dialectical alternatives of behaviour inherent in such, rather than the rigid programming which will shortly bring about the extinction of all the larger anthropoids. But while these animals are still with us, the study of their behaviour is of immense value not for the parallels but chiefly for the distinctions which indicate man's evolutionary deviation from what might have been a common stock, and for the prevention or avoidance of evolutionary cul-de-sac.

Human vices may in fact come to be seen in the light of evolutionary blockages. Arthur Keith's description of slavery as the means by which man clogs his evolutionary machine is particularly apt, and applies to all forms of oppression. Similarly the chauvinistic behaviour which is now described as sexism is a perfect parallel with the phenomenon of pseudosex discovered by Claire Russell in many primate species. There is an advantage in recognising the atavistic nature of human pseudo-sexual sexism—i.e., the usage of the sexual situation for dominance or appeasement within a hierarchy. The possibility that this behaviour has contributed to the arrest of social development in both man and animal is considerable, since it prevents the emergence of group-solidarity and substitutes a less viable hierarchic peck-order.

Sex in humans is highly flexible, varying between canibalistic possessiveness and the final altruistic dedication of love. The study of ape-psychology demonstrated at least the evolutionary limitations of sex as a protection-racket.

Myths and Legends

Looking at the propagandists of human-ape-psychology, one is struck partly by the ancient axiom that every portrait is a self-portrait, and also by the human tendency to mythologise. Here the theory that all myths are political hand-outs is relevant. The "pair-bond" myth handed out by primatologist Morris, while actually lifted from Lorenz' studies of the greylag goose, was woven into hominid history to produce a totaly fictitious legend of sexual fidelity and monogamy equalled only by the Book of Genesis and used as a vindication by precedent of the quite unprecedented social artifact, the nuclear family. It is difficult to think of a justification for this minimal human group except the dubious economic rule of providing one servicing unit for each production unit. For capitalistic Panglossism, Desmond Morris's myth of human pair-bonding takes the prize.

This type of mythological biology is equalled only by the legend of "attachment". The topsy-turvy theory that babies are born in a state of alienation and must somehow attach themselves to their species closely resembles the traditional view that they are born in a state of sin, or the alternatively rosy notion that "man is born free" and only gradually acquires his chains. Babies who are detached from their mothers by hospital staffs and then observed by social psychologists shouting for dear life at the other end of a corridor are naturally thought to be in need of some form of processing before they can be induced to conform to human standards. The former practice of exorcism being no longer fashionable, "attachment" and "imprinting" are dragged in once more from goose-psychology. But babies (and indeed humans in general) are not viable as independent units and, unlike goslings, do not need imprinting to attach them

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to the mother. Being unable to walk, they are in no danger of attaching themselves to the nearest willing predator. Human parents, on the other hand, seem to be in considerable need of imprinting and attachment, as "being left holding the baby" has seldom been regarded as the height of human happiness.

There are empirical reasons for believing that the hooking or imprinting of the mother's nervous system disposing her to responsiveness to the infant is precisely what takes place, and that this is intimately connected with the hormonal condition of increased vulnerability known as the "third-day-blues". It is not surprising that the present generation of women are suspicious of the social confidence-trick which is built around this often unwelcome biological trap. But to reject motherhood once it has happened is to betray posterity, since the most certain fact that has arisen from psycho-analysis is that the sanity of mankind is dependant upon the mothers. Women are thus fenced in by a form of altruism, which once accepted, lays them open to exploitation by the rest of society.

Reductionist Labels

Until this impasse is faced and its paradox exploded, there will be no real peace of mind for the women's liberation movement. Fortunately, there is light at the end of the tunnel. It has to be remembered that millennia of brainwashing has gone into persuading mankind to increase and mutiply, and that even now that the need to control population is acknowledged, no more imaginative solution has arisen than the computerised recommendation to *all* women to produce their 2.5 children.

But let no one imagine that it is a biologic law that all females should breed. On the contrary, it is one more example of pseudo-biological legislation, this time erected in the service of war. Poverty, famine and pollution are the rewards of indescriminate procreation in peacetime. It is the philosophy of war alone which has created the myth of compulsory fecundity, without which both men and women are led to feel alienated and unfulfilled.

Connected with this, and even less easy to throw off—since for women at least, it has become associated with liberation—is the pseudo-biological dogma of the absolute necessity for repetitious sex. Since the Pill, "permissiveness" has been subtly converted into an idelogical compulsion. This, for those who remember it, is a little like the mammoth consumption of chocolate following the termination of rationing, and as unsatisfactory. Sexual freedom, when it is not the dialectical freedom of choice to indulge or abstain without stigmatisation of impotence or frigidity, is no freedom. Equally, the social artifact of exclusive heterosexuality, another pseudo-biological weapon of procreation-obsessed militarism, has no scientific basis in biology. If the love for members of ones own sex were not built into our species, as into all social animals, mothers could not cherish daughters nor fathers sons, nor the mildest degree of cameraderie arise. Nothing is more fragmenting to our fundamentally communistic species than the stigma of deviation which blankets all forms of non-procreative love, forcing even rebels to accept the reductionist labels of Gay or Lesbian when asserting the basic human right to love one's neighbour.

It was well known to the ancients that homosexual love is the enemy of tyranny, since when not forced into unhealthy secrecy, it is a natural instrument of solidarity. But the same is true of all love, when not distorted by sexism, nuclear monogamy or the compulsive machismo/fecundity situation.

If, as we hope, the futility of warfare has been now adequately demonstrated, pseudo-scientific ideologies may be swept away and a biology uncontaminated by militarism called into being to aid human understanding.

The Family Structure

Recent dialogue on the inevitability of the family structure have been curiously inconclusive, leaving participants in a state of perplexity as to whether the family as we know it is an instrument of capitalist oppression or a bulwark against tyranny. Possibly both are true. Certainly all parents deliver hostages into the hands of the establishment. The French have a proverb that a good father of a family is capable of any crime, meaning that the threat to his children lays him open to the dirtiest political or economic blackmail. But how much more is this true of the mothers, whose vulnerability in this respect has continually drawn them into what appeared a "safe" conservative role.

If the world is able to learn the lesson of Vietnam, namely that naked force is impotent against a unified dedicated people, then there is a remote possibility that the world-wide economy of war will diminish in importance. The realisation that the family is basically a component of a war-economy, now as from prehistoric times, will percolate through society, and with it the knowledge that over-production of children has never been justified except as nature's answer to the threat of overkill. Without this threat, the

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rigid constellation of compulsions known as the bourgeois or nuclear family (on the whole inaccurately) that is: the male protection-racket, the childish female dependancy, the enslavement to the orgasm, the artificial delimitations of sexual dimorphism, the imprisonment of the nursing-couple, and the forced alienation of the pre-school child from peer-group and adult community, can be revised, and even swept away.

Then perhaps we may look, with unwashed brain, at a sociology of human communities based upon non-military biology, and it may surprise us. We have listened with growing scepticism to the doctrine of the essential infantile need for intimate relationship with one loving adult. What if the true biologic picture is closer to that of Farley Mowatt's wolf-communities, and the birth of less children should provide each baby with an intimate relationship with several loving adults, who can then take turns in devoting themselves to this most exacting of all tasks?

If every child were not only a wanted child, but also wanted by his or her entire community, a rosier future might be predicted for our species.

The Althusser Debate

D. D. Grant

"*Every ideology, however, once it has arisen, develops in connection with the given concept material, and develops this material further; otherwise it would not be an ideology, that is, occupation with thoughts as with independent entities, developing independently and subject only to their own laws*".[1]

I will insist from the outset that Engels' words can be used as an accurate characterisation of John Lewis's paper; I will also acknowledge and insist upon the conclusions that necessarily follow if this is the case. These conclusions are that John Lewis's paper is anti-Marxist, anti-materialist and anti-scientific, in short, idealist. (*Marxism Today*, Jan.-Feb. 1972)

Idealism and Thought

Idealism's "occupation with thoughts as with independent entities" inevitably involves a method which "depends more on free association of ideas or on a single comparison of terms than on a historical critique".[2] This method is "based on *three theoretical presuppositions* which are always tacitly active in it. The *first presupposition is analytic:* it holds that any theoretical system and any constituted thought is *reducible to its elements:* a precondition that enables one to think any element of this system *on its own*, and to compare it with *another* similar element from *another* system. The *second presupposition is teleological:* it institutes a secret tribunal of history which *judges* the ideas submitted to it, or rather, which permits the dissolution of different systems into their elements, institutes these elements as elements in order to proceed to their measurement according to its own norms as if to *their truth*. Finally, these two presuppositions depend on a *third*, which regards the history of ideas as its own element, maintains that nothing happens there which is not a product of the history of ideas itself and that the world of ideology is *its own principle of intelligibility*".[3]

The immediate consequence of this method for Lewis is the practical denial that the meaning of a concept is a function of the theoretical discourse in which it is produced. For him all concepts are theoretical concepts, or what amounts to the same thing, all theoretical concepts are mere words. Thus a word such as "alienation" is taken as having the same meaning irrespective of its textual context; (presumably the meaning we can all read in any standard dictionary!). But this reduction of any text to its elements, the raison d'etre of bourgeois academic practice, (Marx calls it "the concept-linking method"![4] ignores completely the historical question of the production of theoretical systems as *historically determinate* results of human practice; (in this case, theoretical practice). Such a question can, of course, have no meaning for the practice of ideology which regards itself "as its own principle

[1] Engels. "Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy", Marx Engels Selected Works. Moscow 1968. p. 618.

[2] Althusser. "For Marx" p. 55. (my emphasis. DDG.)

[3] Ibid. pp. 56-57.

[4] Marx. "Notes on Wagner's Lehrbuch" trans. Theoretical Practice Issue 5. London 1972.

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of intelligibility". Marxists, however, will insist that "The evolution of philosophical thought must be traced on the basis of the real evolution of society".[5] (For an outline of the principles that guide the *materialist* study of theoretical formations the reader should refer to "For Marx" pp. 62-63).

"The Break"

It is a necessary result of the method detailed above that Lewis should ascribe this very method itself to Althusser! Thus the rigorously specified concept of the "break" is transformed into a "basic assumption". The treatment given to this concept by Lewis puts in doubt his familiarity with the texts in question. We are told by him that Althusser's evidence for the "break" is Marx's words about "settling accounts". But "the quotation in which Marx himself attests to and locates this break . . . can only be treated as a declaration to be examined and falsified or confirmed, not as a proof of the existence of the break and a definition of its location".[6] In order to carry out the theoretical labours involved in this examination Althusser uses two concepts, themselves products of "the labour transformation of intuition and representation into concepts" (Marx. *Grundrisse*.).

These concepts are that of a "*problematic*", "to designate the particular unity of a theoretical formation and hence the location to be assigned to . . . the specific difference that distinguishes two different theoretical formations".[7] (Today, for example, such theoretical clarity is essential if we are to successfully identify revisionism. It goes without saying that such an identification is a precondition of our successfully combating revisionism. It is not lightly that Lenin warns us "Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement".)

The second concept is that of "an '*epistemological break*' to designate the mutation in the theoretical problematic contemporary with the foundation of a scientific discipline".[8] (Today, for example, such theoretical clarity is essential if we are successfully to identify the specificity of the dialectic. It goes without saying that such an identification is a precondition of our successfully combating idealism.) I should add that these two concepts "are present and active in Marx's scientific thought, even if this presence is most often in the practical state".[9]

The most explicit authorisation of their use is to be found in "the pages of extraordinary theoretical profundity" in Engels' Preface to the Second Volume of "Capital" in which Engels' draws an unequivocal parallel between Marx's "discovery" of surplus-value and Lavoisier's "discovery" of Oxygen, the one already produced by the classical economists, the other by Priestley. But in the face of all that John Lewis is but a latter-day Priestley "who swore by phlogiston to his dying day and refused to have anything to do with Oxygen". (Engels).

Lewis's failure to grasp this concept leads to other incorrect formulations. For instance, he attributes to Althusser the formulation of the "break" as "sudden and dramatic"; but Althusser tells us quite explicitly that "It is impossible to break with a theoretical past with one blow: in every case, words and concepts are needed to break with words and concepts, and often the old words are charged with the conduct of the rupture throughout the period of the search for new ones".[10] It is extraordinary in the light of this very explicit thesis that Lewis should go on to adduce as evidence for the denial of the "break" the continued appearance of certain *words* (he goes so far as to count the number of times the word "alienation" occurs in "Grundrisse") in Marx's texts after the point at which Althusser locates the "break" at the level of "The German Ideology". I should add that the formulation of the "break" as "sudden and dramatic" is quite incompatible with the periodisation of Marx's work adopted by Althusser, detailed in "For Marx" (pp. 33-35), a periodisation which specifically speaks of "The Works of the Break" and "The Transitional Works".

Lewis on "The Break"

There are other positions which Lewis takes with regard to the "break" which go some way to enabling us to situate his own position. Thus, having gone to great lengths to repudiate Althusser, for his own part he introduces the sly volte-face of the substitution of the "break" by the notion of "development"; Marx does not "refute" his "earlier views" but "continues and develops their argument".[11] Similarly, "Marx owed a great deal to Feuerbach".[12] And "'settling accounts' with Hegel is not rejecting him, (any more than the phrase would mean in business)".[13] (This last expression captures in a gem the analytico-teleological method. The accountants here are none other than the "secret tribunal of history" which this method, in the profound unconsciousness of ideology, must invoke in the absence of a theory of theoretical production.) I do not have space here to go into the

[5] Hoeppner. cit. "For Marx" p. 54 footnote 6.
[6] "For Marx" p. 32.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] "For Marx" p. 36.
[11] Marxism Today. Jan. 72. p. 24.
[12] Ibid. p. 25.
[13] Ibid.

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idealist myths of "reading" and "viewpoints" that are the basis of this method. (The reader will find an exposition of their place in the history of the theoretical in the first part of "Reading Capital": "From Capital to Marx's Philosophy"[14]).

Let me however enumerate some of the consequences of such a substitution. First, denial of any problem of the periodisation of Marx's work; this denial carries others in its train: denial of revolutionary transformations in knowledge by way of the denial of the necessity to produce the concepts necessary to specify them; this latter is the route by which "revolution" can become anybody's word and with it such "words" as "social formation", "mode of production", "relations of production", "surplus-value" and "class struggle". But John Lewis should realise that it was never merely a matter of words. "Why does philosophy fight over words? The realities of the class-struggle are "represented" by "ideas" which are "represented" by words. In scientific and philosophical reasoning, the words (concepts, categories) are "instruments" of knowledge. But in political, ideological and philosophical struggle, the words are also weapons, explosives and tranquilisers or poisons. Occasionally the whole class-struggle may be summed up in the struggle of one word against another word"[15]).

It should now come as no surprise to the reader to learn that "Marx's Early Works . . . were exhumed by Social-Democrats and exploited by them to the detriment of Marxism-Leninism".[16] The nature of this exploitation: the denial of the revolutionary specificity of Marx's philosophy, in short, the denial of Marxism-Leninism as a *science*. Need I point out the political function of this conversion which is at the root of the ideology of reformism of all the Social-Democratic parties of our age? Need I point out that unless we resolutely combat this assault on Marxism-Leninism we cannot move one step in the direction of posing, let alone solving the crucial problems facing Marxist political practice in our age—opportunism, reformism and all the revisionisms which lay siege against the proletariat from within the workers' movement itself in an attempt to hide from it (unwittingly or otherwise) the weapons it must forge if it is to make and carry through a revolution against its oppressors.

Humanism

Having come this far we shall soon be able to account for the absence of Marx's concepts in Lewis's texts; the way in which this absence necessarily reverberates throughout his papers, and the way in which this absence is once more necessarily, tied to the presence of other concepts—Man and "humanism". I should point out that Lewis's denial of a specific difference of Marx from Hegel is absolutely tied to his avowal of "humanism" and that both positions depend on a recuperation of Marx's Early Works on the basis of a confusion between the problematic of Feuerbach (the real site of the "inversion" of Hegel) and the problematic of Marx founded in rupture with every variant of the idealist problematic.

This confusion always depends on the invocation of the "concrete" ("the ideological concept which confuses knowledge and being").[17] If for Hegel the "real" was the phenomenal expression of the Idea, for Feuerbach the "abstract" idea was the result of an operation of thought on the real object. For Marx, however, "the concrete-totality as a thought-totality, as a thought-concrete, is in reality a product of thinking and conceiving" and this "product" is arrived at, not by the ceaseless ruminations of empiricism on what it mistakenly thinks as the real object, (which "continues to exist outside the head after as before thought"[18]), but by "the labour of transformation of intuition and representation into concepts".[19] This is the work of science; "in respect to the phenomenal form . . . as contrasted with the essential relation manifested therein . . . the same difference holds that holds in respect to all phenomena and their hidden substratum. The former appear directly and spontaneously as current modes of thought; the latter must first be discovered by science".[20] Despite all attempts to suppress the fact, that are by no means restricted to our own day, "Capital" is such a work of discovery, and Engels makes this supremely clear in the Preface to Volume II.

These remarks should serve to enlighten the reader as to the intentions that lie behind Lewis assertions that "the more traditional type of Marxist . . . has always thought of Marxism in terms of Marx's analysis of capitalist contradictions (in Capital)" and his suggestion that Althusser is "the last champion of an orthodoxy in grave difficulties". They will also serve to enlighten the reader as to why Althusser calls specifically for the study of "Capital" by Marxists in their struggle against the assaults of revisionist ideology. It is not the first time that "Capital" has been the site of this struggle. The reader will recall that this is also the site of

[14] Althusser. "Reading Capital". New Left Editions. 1970.

[15] Althusser. Interview. L'Unita Feb. 68. trans. NLR 64. 1970.

[16] "For Marx". p. 51.

[17] "Reading Capital" pp. 40-41.

[18] Marx. 1857 Introduction.

[19] Marx. "*Grundrisse*". cit. "Reading Capital" pp. 40-41. That this is overlooked in the index to "Reading Capital" is perhaps the basis for Lewis's unfortunate charge that Althusser "never mentions" it!

[20] Capital. Vol. 1. p. 542. Moscow. 1961.

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Lenin's criticism of Mikhailovsky in "What the 'Friends of the People' are". There are remarkable concurrences in Mikhailovsky and Lewis. On the very first page of "Friends of the People", Lenin takes Mikhailovsky to task for his contention that Marx nowhere "expounds his materialist conception of history".[21] Lewis tells us "He (Marx) does not present us with any system".[22] To which Lenin replies, "If Marx did not leave a Logic (with a capital letter), he left us the *logic* of '*Capital*' ".[23]

Lewis says "What (Marx) has in mind is the development of consciousness, of understanding, of the possibilities, the problems, the opportunities and necessities in the actual social situation".[24] But Lenin tells us ". . . Marx's basic idea that the development of the social-economic formations is a process of natural history cuts at the very root of this childish morality which lays claim to the title of sociology. By what means did Marx arrive at this basic idea? He did so by singling out the economic sphere from the various spheres of social life, by singling out *production relations* from all social relations as being basic, primary, determining all other relations. . . . Hitherto sociologists had found it difficult to distinguish the important and the unimportant in the complex network of social phenomena . . . and had been unable to discover any objective criterion for such a demarcation. Materialism provided an absolutely objective criterion by singling out *production relations* as the structure of society, and by making it possible to apply to these relations that general scientific criterion of recurrence whose applicability to sociology the subjectivists denied . . . the analysis of material social relations at once made it possible to observe recurrence and regularity and to generalise the systems of the various countries in the single fundamental concept: *social formation*".[25]

Class Struggle Suppressed

Humanism, with its so called theory of alienation, in suppressing "Capital" suppresses also the concept of class-struggle. By invoking "Man" it turns a blind eye to the irreconcilable antagonism between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. It must disavow "Capital" to achieve this, for "Capital" is above all the theory of the class-struggle. The reader will have noted the telling absence of this concept in Lewis's papers. The ideologists of "humanism" would have us rewrite the first sentence of the "Manifesto" as "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of man's self-alienation". It was precisely this function of suppression that the original resurrection of the "Manuscripts" served for the reformist International.

As for "alienation"; Lewis justifies this term with a quotation from the Manuscripts where Marx says "the worker sinks to the level of a commodity". I shall let the older, and wiser Marx answer this youthful formulation himself: "The continuance of this relation (between capital and labour) demands that the owner of the labour-power should sell it only for a definite period, for if he were to sell it rump and stump, once for all, he would be selling himself, converting himself from a free man into a slave, *from an owner of a commodity into a commodity*".[26]

There are many further aspects of John Lewis's texts which I should have liked to deal with and which space does not permit here. I have no doubt, however, that readers of Marxism Today will pursue these in their own studies.

[21] Lenin. "What the 'Friends of the People' are". Moscow. 70. p. 7.
[22] Marxism Today. Feb. 72. p. 46.
[23] Philosophical Notebooks.
[24] Marxism Today. op. cit.
[25] "What the 'Friends of the People' are". pp. 11-14. (Author's emphasis.)
[26] Capital. Vol. 1. p. 168. Moscow 1961. (my emphasis DDG).

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